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GOD IN HIS WORLD

AN INTERPRETATION

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

WHAT is herein written is individual, as is all interpretation, but has been without previous design as to its undertaking or its shaping. It cannot be said that it was of compulsion, since it is only in an absolutely free movement that one is caught and carried forward, as if independently of all self-determination, to an issue of which there is no prevision. It has not been the result of any striving after truth. An interpretation is not an invention, a mental construction, a speculation, but a vision of living reality as seen in the light of its own life.

What is Interpretation?

II

BUT even in interpretation there are different fields of vision. As one may read a book with reference merely to its grammar or style, so one may regard Nature with reference merely to the mathematics of her movements, and he will thus gain real knowledge, and valuable, as applicable to the material uses of life; and, incidentally, he will receive larger meanings and impressions. But, if he will put aside these limitations as to the scope and motive of his regard, and, as a lover of Nature, follow her living ways, she will reveal herself to him. He will cease to make mere generalisations and classifications, and to lay such stress upon nomenclature

Real Knowledge.

that he would seem to be a kind of scientific Nominalist. Laying aside his mathematical chart of Nature, he will confront her vitalities, and so leave the field of his mere understanding, entering into a responsive and sympathetic association with her, expecting her precious communications, as a youthful lover awaits the shy revealings of the heart of his beloved. It does not matter where he starts. He may follow the bees as they fertilise flowers, and there will be unfolded to him a beautiful mystery. If he will follow the butterflies, he will receive an evangel, not excluding a hint of the Resurrection. It is thus that Science is being born again, the meek inheriting her earth. It is true that a patient witness to Nature, like Darwin, will be followed by a host of Nominalists, who will ignore the life, apotheosising a notion, as in making a God of Natural Selection. The genuine and sincere agnosticism is the meekness of those content with the unfoldings of a real life, excluding the arbitrary and supposititious. The true agnostics keep to the simplicity of faith, instead of constructing a kind of scientific mythology, in which Laws and Forces parade with Olympian majesty.

III

Concurrently with the new movement of Science, following Nature's invitation to her intimacies, there has been in all the fields of Art a revolt against Academic traditions — a protest against conventionalism, allegorical conceits and loose romanticism. It is a plea for Nature and for the ideal worth of all her embodiments, however grotesque or faultful — thus absolving the ideal from formal perfectness, and holding it only to the justification of its own children. Yet, in its highest demand, this Realism would insist upon the spirit-

Realism in Art.

ual genesis of all artistic representations — upon their faithfulness to an everlasting type, upon their sincerity and spontaneity, and upon their vital sympathy and humor, so that they shall, like all of Nature's growths, have the vital warmth of the sunshine and the freshness of the dew. While holding to reality, these representations transcend not only all mental anticipation, but the real suggestion, having, like the unfoldings of Nature, aspiration, culmination, and, as a final issue, surprises.

Art is pre-eminently an expression of human nature, yet, though keeping to the type, it transcends and contradicts human experience, suggesting in its rhythmic harmonies those of the divine kingdom, so that Imagination is indeed the true sister of Faith. Its free movement following a mysterious vital chemistry, and repudiating conscious regulation, takes us out of ourselves, as we have made ourselves, and within the confines of our heavenly realm. That is not, therefore, a genuine realism which denies to Imagination its realm of the air and the freedom of its wings; which, while it must feel its way, determines to grope in the field of human pathology, ignoring health and hope, and identifying itself with pessimism; and which, in its avoidance of romanticism, fails also of heroic moments and of all the illusions that wait upon light and love.

IV

It would be strange if a tendency so manifest in Science and Art should not be noticeable in all our life, and especially in our Faith.

Always and independently of our own determination, our lives are bound to the imperative realities of Nature, within us as well as without. But it is the response,

within the field of our free choice, of our wills to the Father's will which determines our spiritual life, or which is rather the submission of all our conscious activities to the mastery of the divine life and its determination. This divine life is shown to us only in the Real—in Nature and in Man, and chiefly in Christ. This is Christian Realism.

Christian Realism.

V

If we would be Christians on our conscious side—in our sensibilities and impressions, as well as in our activities, all our knowledge must be born again—including our interpretation of human life.

The Guide to the True Interpretation of Human Life.

Following the lines of human development, we become aware of an element of confusion disturbing our field of vision. It matters not what may be our theory as to the origin of man,—whether he was evolved from lower species, or, if not, whether he was first of all a wild man (as Nature is wild), and any conclusion we may reach as to either of these questions must be wholly imaginary,—it is certain that there has been human degeneration; and we are more distinctly conscious of this in ourselves than in any general view of humanity. There is nothing in the lower animals corresponding to human selfishness; whatever there is in them of violence is the following of a divine intent; human vices have no counterpart in their development. And the first men, if wild, were at least true to their natural wildness, until they became perverted. The perversion has continued with every transmutation of human energy to higher forms—higher in the sense that they are more refined.

We are, then, following not only the ways of life, in this study, but the ways of spiritual death also; and we are

helped by the Gospel of Nature and of Christ to distinguish between them. In this guidance Nature is only preparatory to Christ's completeness, feeding us upon her locusts and wild honey until he gives us, in his flesh and blood, (his human revelation of the Father,) the heavenly bread and wine and we behold in him the expression of the divine life after our own type. Nature shows us the same life after her types, until we come to man, in whom the expression is blurred and confused by the counter-currents of his self-will. For the human expression of the divine life, therefore, we must look to the Son of Man. The indications given us by Nature are not reversed but continued and completed in him — so continued and completed that they are themselves for the first time clearly comprehended because of their illustration in his life. This illustration of Nature culminates in his Resurrection; for what are her teaching images, signifying the renewal of life (her very name meaning "the forever being born") to his rising again, which shows forth implicitly our own? Christ, then, as showing the unperverted expression of the divine life in the human, must ever be present to us as a divine standard of truth in our interpretation of life.

VI

Let us take, for example, the meaning of association, as indicated in Nature, as expressed in human history, and as unfolded by our Lord.

Association in Nature.

Nature is uniform in all her laws; yet, when we regard her vitalities, we are first impressed by their individualism rather than by their co-operation. Nature's ultimates are individual, and each individual is in some respects distinguished from every

other, though a certain uniformity of habit is apparent, so well expressed by Wordsworth's characterisation of a grazing herd:

"There are forty feeding like one."

Each individual seems to live for itself alone, and to live at the expense of other life. But a closer following of Nature's ways discloses the co-operation and interdependence of all her activities, so that insects, in the satisfaction of appetite, secure the continuance of even lower life. We note also a tendency of the individual toward a fixed local establishment of itself, as the plants take root in the earth, and animals have a homing instinct. But a larger view discloses compulsory dislocations and migrations in the fulfilment of a purpose hidden from the individuals concerned. The question as to conscious individual co-operation with the divine will cannot occur until we confront an order of beings having wills capable of choice and therefore of resistance.

In man we behold such a being, and his history is a record of such resistance, which is nowhere more manifest than in his associative development. We note intense individualism here, as in all natural life, notwithstanding the compulsion of the social instinct, which is strongest in man; but we see this individualism taking unnatural shapes in the various manifestations of human selfishness; and these enter into and distort the associative development itself, characterising communities and nations, and maintained by even religious sanctions. All the refinements of civilisation serve only to disguise them, the ultimate refinement which humanity can ever reach not eradicating them, but holding them in the leash of silence, in an equilibrium of selfishness balanced against selfishness, which we call justice.

In Man.

Now, to one regarding this development without any divine standard applicable both to human action and natural operation, there is an intricacy of confusion; and he might easily infer not only that selfishness in these abnormal shapes is natural to man and ineradicable, but that the same quality is characteristic of all nature. Nor would the Divine Being escape this distortion in man's conception.

As Unfolded by Christ.

But now One comes full of grace and truth, who is one with the Father, and shows not only an unselfish individual life,—in no way contradicting Nature, illustrating the life which man, holding his proper place in Nature, would lead,—but also an association growing out of love and developing the growth of love. This One shows us Nature as she really is, and we see that she also is full of grace and truth, revealing the Father, and that, confronting this loving human fellowship, the veil by which she has been disguised in our misconception is put aside. She has waited to bless with all her united vitalities a united human brotherhood.

VII

The Complete Revelation.

Thus our Lord takes away all our veils and disguises, and we receive the complete Gospel of a real life — so that we no longer distinguish between the real and the ideal, since both are united in him. The new life of the regenerate is a full disclosure of human degeneration. Showing us our own divinity — giving us power to become the sons of God — he shows us also the divinity of Nature, and what the divine is in itself, in its reality. All our notional negations defining God as the Infinite and the Absolute, all

our mental constructions of Him, based upon our conceptions of government and jurisprudence and even upon our perverted passions, are set aside by our Lord's revelation of Him. Even His Almightiness is eclipsed by His All-lovingness. He is the Father, and we are to recognise Him as such, chiefly in that we love all men as brethren. He ministers unto us and not we unto Him; we serve Him only in serving all men. In loving his brother, whom he hath seen, man loves God whom he hath not seen. The loving human fellowship is the real divine communion. The spiritual life is not a mystical contemplation of divine attributes or of a divine essence, it is the associative development of the Kingdom. In loving one another we find God.

The presence of the divine, as Real, is that which gives life all its glory and spiritual death all its sting. We evade this presence when we substitute for its real manifestation some abstract notion which is but a shadow thereof. The anchorite enters not into a spiritual exaltation but into the ecstasy of a shadowy world. Abstruse study of divine things leads into the same realm. God is to be found only in the Real because He is a Spirit, since the Spirit is manifest only in some pulsing, throbbing embodiment. All of Nature shows us God. All of Christ shows us Him; and we especially find Him in identifying ourselves with all Humanity in Christ.

VIII

Now, thus led by our Lord to this real fellowship — to this festival of human love, whereof he always takes his place as the Master, so that therein we realise the divine love, we in this Real Presence also have revealed to us the enormity of sin. For this Kingdom of the Real is a

realm not only of wondrous delight but of wondrous awe. Our mental regard of this world of love is a by-play and a mockery. But once in touch with its realities, once entering into its fellowships, we experience inconceivable joy — but the other side of that joy is penitence. And no one is really penitent until he has returned to his Father's house. It is only Love entering and filling our hearts that discloses the monstrous shapes of our perversions — our selfishness, our lack of love and our betrayals and denials and distortions thereof. We then clearly see, when we are in the large ways of life, how our perversions, our hardness of heart, made the way thereto seem so straight and difficult. To the child, indeed, it is but a step; he has no fear, though he feels the awe. The innocent maiden is so near, hovering shyly always upon its tremulous boundaries! Every mother, it would seem, should hold the divine love in her heart, and hear its whisperings from baby lips. But they who have wandered far, whose hearts have been hardened by resistance to love, and who, in their loves most of all, have blasphemed love — these are as dear as any to the loving Father, but how hardly shall they enter the kingdom, and, having entered, what must they suffer! It would be easy enough for them to assent to any creed, to betake themselves to an infinite, absolute and notionally conceived divinity, to accept any purely theological plan of salvation, to go through any outward form, to recite prayers and undergo penances, to give tithes of all that they possess — but they confront no such elements or requirements. They are not striving for pardon — it is a forgiveness which is striving with them. Their sorrow is no part of a dramatic, but of a real situation. The divine is not remote and absolute, but a near fellowship, touching their lives at every point, and espe-

The Realisation of Sin in this Real Presence.

cially in every human association. They have found God in the only, the real way, and their pains are incident to the travail of a new birth. It is love that is working in them, nevertheless it is a consuming fire. The whole heart is melted in penitent sorrow. It is not an intellectual conviction, there is no mental evasion of the awful reality, no reference to Adam or any outside Tempter; there is no room here for subtleties or for doctrines. The old hard life is being broken up, fused in fervent heat. Love is a flame, at once building a new life with tender clingings and aspirations, and burning up the old, scathingly, relentlessly.

No thought of Justice can occur in this Presence. That comes to those who are brought into an unreal kingdom which Christ has never shown us, by an unreal, doctrinal way. Then the situation becomes wholly dramatic — Justice is met by Sacrifice, and an imputed righteousness to the sinner by imputed sin to the sinless one.

IX

Christian Interpretation of History.

CHRIST is also our standard of truth in our interpretation of history. We behold a world which has come into judgment — not the judgment of outward condemnation, but of love searching the heart of man. It is a judgment from within and self-operative. We see also that, apart from the Incarnation, there is the everlasting Christ, that in all human development there are indications of a saving love, and, notwithstanding the perversions of religion, of a saving faith. There is the operation of the Eternal Word, and there are living ways as well as the ways of death.

Even Paganism was, in the naïve simplicity of its primitive development, a life. In the early Aryan faith we be-

hold its purest and most spiritual form, as shown in the Vedic hymns. In this faith were caught deeper spiritual meanings of Nature than are unfolded to modern science or æstheticism, because Nature was regarded as a living Reality, showing the divine life. And this life is apparent even in the later period of Aryan development, in the more dramatic shaping of faith in the Sacred Mysteries. The conception of a Demeter fathomed the profound sympathy of Nature as a Great Mother, bearing the sorrows of all her children; and the hopeful image of Persephone restored from Hades to the visible world was a foreshadowing of the clearer revelation of an endless life in the Resurrection of our Lord. The fatal defect of all Pagan faith was its lack of embodiment in a human fellowship based upon the spirit of love.

X

The First Three Christian Centuries.

In the heavenly light which our Lord brings to our vision, we shall comprehend the wonderful spread of Christianity in its first three centuries, when it was expanding through its own inherent law of love, rejecting all worldly methods, and expressing the vitality of the Gospel, which is the vitality of a new life, wholly real. But for certain tendencies toward official ecclesiasticism and asceticism apparent toward the close of the period, this early Christian life is a complete correspondence to Nature; physical death is accounted for nought, as it is in Nature's realm; the meek, unresisting children come into their inheritance, their patience tiring their persecutors; their life, renewed and kept soft and tender by the divine life to which they have wholly yielded their wills, overcoming the induration of the world, even as in Nature the soft new growths pull

down and bring to nought all that is old and outworn. Here was a kingdom of the unlearned, whose domination was over human hearts, receiving within its fellowship millions of slaves, whom Paganism had excluded from its Mysteries. At last, however, many who were learned in worldly wisdom, and some of whom were called Fathers of the Church, seeing what might there was in this kingdom, began to translate its life into the terms of their wisdom; and they asked, Why should not the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them belong to Christ? — forgetting that he had once refused them. Then came Constantine the Great, making them an offer of all of these, and they were tempted, and many even of the elect were deceived.

XI

A Revision of Historical Judgments.

We shall also see that a divine purpose is manifest in ways hidden from men, in breaking up established structures, fixed forms, and traditional bonds — the operation of a loosing and saving power. One of the most striking evidences of this divine life, operating in all human movements, and having no direct connection with ecclesiastical development, is the fact that all the mechanical systems of this world not only are made to subserve a divine purpose, but, at a certain point, — just that point, too, which would seem to be fixed upon as the culmination of some merely worldly design, — are arrested, and the divine issue is precipitated. All the decisive moments of history are such divine surprises. These crises are never in any true sense anticipated by human reason — the rational anticipation being so limited and so notional in its foreshaping of a suppositious drama, that the Reality escapes all mental premoni-

tion. Faith presupposes not — it waits. We are now approaching such a crisis. No human wisdom can predict its shaping any more than it can prevent the issue. The air is full of auguries, and even our fiction has become very precisely apocalyptic. It is theoretic prophecy, anticipating the realisation of perfect scientific and social economics — the Paradise of Outward Comfortableness; and these expectations are no nearer the real truth than were the millennial visions of the Augustan Age which heralded a sort of Imperial Arcady under Cæsarean auspices — while the coming Reality ruined everything that in these visions seemed secure, including the Empire itself.

And after the Real Issue has been developed, our interpretation thereof is as inadequate as our anticipation — so insistent is our dramatic theory in the philosophy of history. In the light of the Reality itself we must often revise the verdict of this philosophy, which is based upon a partial judgment, taking account of accessories and environments, but no account whatever of the divine and vital impulse and meaning. Thus the period consequent upon the fall of the Roman Empire is called the Dark Ages. But, in truth, the fresh Barbarian life, breaking down the imperial structure, was letting light into a charnel-house, and their rude triumph was the break of dawn for modern Christendom. Palsied as, for a long time, were these vitalities by the chill of the Roman death, they were worth far more to the world than the much vaunted Revival of Learning, — in them was the real Renaissance of Europe, obstructed and misdirected rather than helped by the new lease of life extended to the traditions of an older world. The freedom of a life nearer to natural impulse than to mental suggestion is always the hope of the world. We are forever overestimating the value of intellectual culture.

In periods not characterised by mental refinement and when the imagination submitted wholly to natural impressions, modified only by some inward impulse — also natural, but subject to no intellectual restraint — there entered into the expression of faith a grotesque element which offends our modern sensibility. Paganism, even in its perversion, held so closely to Nature, tolerating, imitating, nay exaggerating, and oftentimes caricaturing her wildness and violence, that we are not surprised by its Bacchanals. Not having the same abandon, but still grotesque, even to coarseness, were many of the mediæval manifestations of the popular Christian faith. It was an element reflected in the art of that period, even in the details of cathedral construction. Its most striking exemplification, perhaps, is in the old Mystery Plays, which began as parts of the solemn worship in the cathedral service.

It was coarse; it was even a travesty of divine things; it was associated with a system which begat many abuses, and one of these, doubtless, was the extreme grossness of all religious conceptions which determined the shaping of these sacred comedies; yet it lies on the sunny side of faith in its naturalness, its nearness to laughter in a divine presence, its naïve and homely familiarity. If there is in it much that is repellant, how much also is there that we miss — even as we miss the enthusiasm which built the cathedrals and mustered the armies of the Crusades.

XII

In this light, also, the terrible waste is disclosed in what we moderns call our economy — not merely in that outward economy which involves so much loss of force and material through the strife and attrition of energies that

ought to be united, but in our spiritual economy, which either ignores or crucifies all the fresh, divinely sent life, flowing into it for its salvation.

Waste of Youth.

The newness of life which comes with every generation is a divinely ordained force for our social regeneration. Forever the Master places the child in our midst, as a symbol of his kingdom — the power to renew and remould our life. Every child is a fresh manifestation of the Christ, divinely born, sent even as he was sent, for our inspiration and leadership; and, received in this way, a single generation of children would renovate the world. Instead of availing ourselves of this marvellous power, we put these leaders behind us, and impose upon them the hard and fast mould of an older life, striving with them to anticipate the Gospel of our Lord in their hearts by the maxims of worldly experience, and the forms and traditions of a worldly ecclesiasticism.

XIII

Realism of the Gospel.

In what we say of Realism we are regarding the living reality, and our interpretation is the truth as seen in the light of the unfolding life. The unfolding of a life is its Nature. It is in this sense that we say there is no supernatural truth. That which we call the supernatural world is a world of our mental construction, and consists for the most part in the reversal or denial of all that is of divine ordinance and of all divinely unfolded life. Revelation is of no value to us, save as it is the unfolding of a real life, and, as such, it must be natural. The incarnate Christ is an unfolding of the Father through the unfolding of a human nature which is "One with the Father."

The Nature-Christ, the Eternal Son, revealing the

Father, is in no wise prevented or interrupted by the Christ-Nature, the incarnate Word, but is continued and completed thereby. Whosoever in any age or country has interpreted the spiritual meanings of the Nature-Christ, in childlike faith appropriating the divine life through any living way, has had, not the complete, but a saving Gospel; he has accepted Christ. There is no living way that is "some other way" than his.

There is for us no Gospel of the Supernatural. The term "miracles," in the supernatural sense, is not germane to the Gospel. Our Lord's expression "mighty works" — which he says he does not of himself — has no such meaning. "Ye know not the power of God," he said; and when we regard Nature not as a mechanism — as in Paley's similitude of a watch — but as the direct manifestation of the Father, we are not surprised by any degree of power shown therein, especially in response to the faith of the children of this Father; nor can we call such extraordinary manifestations supernatural, since it is in Nature that they occur. The healing of disease is in the line of the reparative processes which are characteristic of Nature; and human co-operation with these processes, through faith, gives this restorative power its full effectiveness. Is human science competent to determine the limitations of this power? May not this power revive the dead? The constantly recurring resurrection of the dead would be regarded as natural. How then can a single case be called supernatural? The reappearance of a human life is as natural as its first appearance. He lived — he died,— he lives again; is this series of terms quite as marvellous, after all, as the usual series: He was not — he is?

XIV

THE fact of our Lord's resurrection is of vital importance in the Christian's faith. If it be taken away, all the divine truth otherwise unfolded by Christ still remains — but it lacks its consummation. It is not important as a proof of any theological doctrine, but as an illustration of the persistence not only of life but of the natural type. Nature shows this truth in her own life and as to her own types, except for animate existence. Our Lord would seem less than Nature if he had not continued and completed this unfolding of truth for all flesh. Our Lord's Resurrection.

The scientific denial of the fact of Christ's resurrection rests on the basis of its singularity. If in the course of all astronomical observation but a single comet had been observed, and that two or three thousand years ago, the fact would be denied on the same basis; all heavenly bodies moving in elliptical orbits, this once observed occurrence of an orbit so entirely singular would be attributed to an optical illusion rather than credited as an actual fact.

But the resurrection is no more singular than was the whole life of our Lord; and, so accordant is it with all that is distinctive in that life, being necessary to its completeness, that we are not surprised by his frequently expressed anticipation thereof. Contemplating this life in all its course up to the moment of death, we also entertain this expectation, which is as natural and as lively a hope as that we have of to-morrow's sunrise. For it would be to us spiritually what it would be to the physical world if the sun were to set, never to rise again, if he, who alone of all men represented the restoration of humanity to the natural and heavenly type — who alone could say, "I am

the Way, the Truth, the Life"—should be a Way ending in the tomb, a Truth lacking the revelation of Immortality, a Life swallowed up in Death. The Christian faith would thus fall short not only of natural intimations but of Paganism, which, as an interpretation of Nature's symbolism, involved the belief in a risen Lord of Life, with whom in death his followers were identified in the hope that they should partake of his resurrection. The truth of the Resurrection and the truth of a Messiah must stand or fall together.

XV

Correspondence of Christ to Nature.

The Christ of the Gospel is wholly natural. Not only was the Father revealed in him but He was revealed by a method and an operation which illustrate an eternal familiarity, such as is illustrated by the method and operation of Nature. It is because of this that he may be truly called the Wonderful. He was human, but there could be no miracle so impressive as the fact that, being human, he yet reversed all the processes of a universally perverted human nature. He spoke our speech, but in his utterances all the ordinary currents of a human thought gone wrong and turned awry were reversed, so that his sayings contradicted every maxim of human experience, even as does Nature, when we comprehend her divine meanings. He spoke with divine authority—the kind of authority which is impressed upon us by every manifestation of Nature. He does nothing and says nothing which men usually expect, or as they expect, good men to do or say. His doings and sayings, both as to matter and manner, beget the expectation which they meet. The vital reality of the Gospel is just here—in that an utterance of the Lord, heard for the first time,

is to the human consciousness as much a surprise as is the first seen blossoming of a flower; and the response in our sensibility seems to have its ground in the utterance (as our response to the unfolding flower seems to have its ground in that which awakens it) and to be an equal surprise. There is indeed in us that which witnesseth to the everlasting familiarity, and thus a reconcilement. We are borne upon this vital Gospel current, which never lacks the surprises nor loses the familiarity of nature, from the manger in Bethlehem to the final parting from the disciples on Olivet. The mighty works of healing and the Resurrection seem to belong to this movement as naturally as the Parables or the Sermon on the Mount.

XVI

The kingdom of heaven as unfolded by our Lord is a Kingdom of the Real, and as it reflects the divine traits shown in Nature, it must of necessity contradict human conceptions based upon experience — upon a system out of harmony with Nature and the Father. The moment we depart from the living reality, we construct for ourselves a false world. The Gospel holds us close to this reality, and at the same time guards against material limitations, against dead realism. There is no distinction between the vitally Real and the Ideal or Spiritual.

The Kingdom of the Real.

It is a part of human perversion that we lay stress upon what we call absolute truth. The Gospel knows nothing of such truth. It shows us no abstract divinity. It develops no system of ethics; love knows no ethical obligation. It simply offers us the divine life, and we are invited to submit our wills to the mastery of this life. No plan of salvation is presented; if we accept the life, salvation and

the knowledge of divine truth will follow as a matter of course. No rules for life are given — it is a chartless kingdom. The life itself is illustrated in the life of our Lord, and its truth unfolded in divine Parables.

The Gospel reverses all human judgments and abrogates all outward judgment. All judgment is real — of the Life. The kingdom is not the field of criticism. The reality of every Gospel situation is its distinctive feature. "Is it lawful to pay tribute?" . . . "Show me the penny." There is nothing in Molière or Shakespeare so impressive as that scene, especially characteristic of the divine humor, when the sinful woman is brought before our Lord. It is a real situation — the reality expressing itself, and reinforced by the profound silence.

Our Lord chose for his disciples men without mental training, unsophisticated fishermen, who were in daily contact with natural realities. The truths of the kingdom are most readily received by babes. They are the truths of a first and not of a second nature — that is, not of a worldly second nature, which is the result of training.

XVII

The position of the Christian theologian is too apt to be that of a belief in Christ so independent of Nature and dissociated from her that he must translate the truths of the Gospel into a supposititious realm of the Supernatural, and, identifying this realm with the spiritual world, must deny to Nature any spiritual significance. He thereby takes common ground with the sceptic against the Gospel, which declares the manifestation of the Eternal Word in Nature, and which nowhere supposes any spiritual kingdom divorced from the natural. The sceptic will not

The Theological Revolt against Nature.

have Christianity in his Nature, and the theologian will not admit Nature into his Christianity. What a limitation, on the one side, of Nature, and, on the other, what a devitalisation of Christianity! Both Nature and Christianity are thus reduced to mechanical systems, excluding and antagonising each other; so that sceptical science is distinguished by its contempt of Christianity and theology by its contempt of Nature.

The ultimate goal of this flight from Nature is the Nirvana of Buddhism.

Now, it is through the Resurrection of our Lord that the eternal life of the Gospel is brought into clear light as once and for all a reconcilement to the natural type, and the time is come for us to revert from the superimposed notional structure of theology to the Gospel Reality.

The Resurrection instead of opening closes the door to the Supernatural — to a spiritual life upon a notional basis. It was the natural complement of a Life completing Nature, and its significance is in perfect accord with the Gospel declaration of our Lord's power over all flesh as well as with the declaration of St. Paul that the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the Sons of God.

XVIII

Reality of Imagination in the Gospel.

The Kingdom of the Real includes the realm of the Imagination. As our perverted life — the expression of Self-Will instead of the Father's will — is to external appearance empty and insignificant, a masquerade; as its knowledge is a reflex of its hollowness; so are its imaginings errant and vain. The divine life is so insistently immanent and operative in even the unconsenting human heart that

the masquerade becomes a sort of divine comedy; and the constructions of the Imagination, answering more readily, because of their very spontaneity, to a divine impulse, are often lifted above the discord and confusion, and reflect the heavenly harmony. How much more readily, when there is the full acceptance of the divine life, will the shapings of the Imagination respond to the aspirations of Faith! And these shapings will have the reality of the Faith itself.

It is a reality which cannot be submitted to the test of logical criticism. Nature herself does not conform to logical anticipation. Once having reached a conception of the globular form of the earth and of the sun as a centre of planetary motion, logic would anticipate the perfect sphericality of the globe and perfectly circular orbits. It is this anticipation that must conform to the reality — not the reality to the anticipation. You make a perfectly spherical surface for your lens, and, upon trial, find your telescope worthless. The logical perfection of form is a fatal defect. The error of the Ptolemaic system of astronomy was based not upon a deception of the eye but upon a false logical inference. And yet we are so tolerant of this logical error that all men will to the end of time speak of the sun as rising and setting. Are logical inferences and anticipations any more likely to be infallible when applied to the realities of Faith or to the operations of a divinely inspired imagination?

It is not necessary to attribute infallibility to the shapings of an imagination thus inspired, or indeed, to Faith itself.

Those who first received the Gospel were not only ignorant but superstitious. The evangelists show no literary skill, and their narratives betray no effort to secure absolute accuracy of statement or consistency with each other. We

are not surprised that they should tinge the record with their superstitious feeling, or even that they should sometimes unconsciously shape our Lord's utterances in accordance with some construction of their own — as in some passages that seem to predict the end of the world as at hand. But the divine lines are so strongly drawn that no Christian ever was or ever could be deceived or misled.

A vital faith may operate through an imperfectly developed consciousness; it may even have expression through superstitious legends and embodiments, through anthropomorphism, yea, even through illusions. It does not thereby enter into the field of judgment; this faith of the children neither judges nor submits to judgment. Criticism is of another world. This is, indeed, true of any vital exaltation or passion — even its illusions are imperative, simply because they are born of it.

This is not to say that ignorance and superstition are essential to faith. But if this faith be simple, childlike, submissive to the divine life and a full acceptance thereof, there is no occasion for concern. The divine life will develop its own wisdom in its own time and in its own vital way.

The real danger is in a false interpretation of these perfectly natural manifestations. If the children are singing, we must give them the freedom of their hosannas. Whatever flight their song may take — though it pierce the heavens and rise on the wings of apocalyptic vision to the highest heaven — it cannot adequately express the real exaltation of their Lord. They are expressing their own feeling in childlike fashion. But if we take the shaping of their imagination as having truth apart from its relation to this feeling, if we rob it of its wings and bring down its body trailing lifelessly upon the ground, making of it a theological dogma, with logical consequences — the chil-

dren themselves will not recognise it. We cannot follow them with our logic, or by means of it get as near the truth as they. Shall we then help their truth by fixing it in a formal creed?

The reality in this case is that of a feeling, divinely moved; and though the feeling may be imperfectly expressed, it will be divinely led to higher planes of expression until it is in complete accord with the heavenly song. The spiritual life is a growth, and there is a constant transmutation in its shapings of divine truth. To fix immutably any of these shapings, in the form of a theological dogma, is not only a violent dislocation but an arrest of development. A true illusion may thus become an illusory truth.

XIX

By the Gospel, then, we are delivered from our unnatural life — from its selfish isolations, its disguises and conventions, its artificial joys and solemnities, from all the vain stabilities of worldly masques and structures, from all the maxims of the wise and prudent, and from all pride and hardness of heart.

The Realism of our Christian faith gives catholicity, binding us up with Nature, in a covenant including every living creature, and uniting all men in one brotherhood.

Confronting the divine life in all its vital realities, without us and within us, substituting interpretation for criticism, receiving the life instead of expecting to attain thereunto by the athletic exercise of either our wills or our understandings, we are inevitably brought to Christ — to Nature — to the Gospel. Taking any other way we as inevitably exclude and repudiate them.

When we fly from the divinely real to a humanly conceived realm of shadows — whatever we may call it,

Metaphysic, Theology, Mysticism, or Supernaturalism — when we identify our own consecration or the sacredness of things with sequestration from natural uses; when Christian fellowships are based upon exclusiveness, divided from each other by shibboleths, and from the general community by that kind of shibboleth which, while readily admitting spiritual indifferentism and worldly formalism and respectability, repels the quick life of humanity — then we are shutting out our Lord. It is then that men calling upon the name of the Lord repudiate his Gospel, having no dread quite equal to that of the realisation upon earth of the kingdom of heaven.

The reality of this kingdom is traced in lines too strong to be effaced or explained away; therefore its life is assumed to be impracticable on earth, and is postponed to some other and better world.

Is the Gospel Life Practicable?

Truly the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. In every successive state of their development, they come nearer and nearer to a simulation of the kingdom unfolded in the Gospel. While the Christian theorist insists that human selfishness is ineradicable, the movement of an unregenerate society is tending to a point where altruism will be accepted as a scientific necessity. Men have already so far comprehended the divine teachings of Nature as to know that there is no individual health except through the health of the community. They find also, now that they undertake vast industrial and commercial enterprises, that, having called so largely upon Nature's vitalities, they are confronting also her larger spiritual meanings, unheeded hitherto, and that their vast and complex machinery, with its accelerations through steam and electricity, will not work without incalculable waste, friction, and uncertainty as to its beneficent result to any one concerned in its

management, except through a human fellowship in its control as universal as Nature's own co-operation therewith. Thus the children of this world, keeping close to natural uses, stand face to face with vitalities whose laws point to Christ, and compel them at least to assume that selfishness is impracticable. Shall not the Christian accept the reality, when worldly science cannot evade the similitude?

We begin to comprehend the divine humor in that saying of our Lord to his disciples: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

XX

THERE is no theory of Perfectionism involved in this life of the Kingdom. It involves no theory of any sort. The term perfection is not real but notional. Our development is in the Kingdom of the Real, which eschews the perfect, the infinite, the absolute — all of which are negations. We do not set before ourselves mental aims and ideals. We accept the divine life, and its aspirations are of its own genesis, not of our determination. It is a life of surprises, of which we have no mental anticipation. The marvels of Science are but images of the marvels of the life of the kingdom on earth.

A Life of Surprises.

The faith in this life has in it no mysticism. We do not shut our eyes to Nature that we may see God, any more than we would resolve the body that we may find the soul. We do not extinguish the passions and appetites which are ours by nature. We accept them as a part of the divine life, and they take their divinely appointed place in the kingdom. We see then what is their subordination,

which is not that of the physical to the mental but of the physical to the spiritual. The heavenly does not abolish the earthly but consists therewith.

XXI

The indwelling of the Father in Christ is in nothing more manifest than in his faith. It was faith in the supreme domination of the divine life — as a real life. It was a leaven sure to leaven the whole lump. Love would conquer. The meek would surely inherit the earth. Such was his faith in the new life that he sought in no way to destroy the old Judaic religion and to institute another in its place. Though bidding his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, he participated in the synagogue worship and even in the great annual feasts at Jerusalem, and he expected that his disciples would follow his example in this respect, as indeed they did until the destruction of the Temple itself. He established not a new system of religion but a new fellowship, based upon love. The expansion of that fellowship was to be the expansion of the kingdom.

There was a calling out of his followers (an *ecclesia*), but there was also to be a going forth of these, a mingling with humanity, the salt not losing thereby its heavenly savor. The field was the world. He had, by an association with sinners which was a scandal to the Pharisees, taught his disciples a like fearless commingling with them.

But how are the followers of Christ to exist in the world without some accommodation to its system?

Christians are taught submissions to exactions — like that of the tribute — though, as children, they are at the same time declared free. Our Lord's guidance as to this matter of submission is clear, the line being drawn at the

point where we are required to surrender any principle of the spiritual life. And as to non-resistance, the natural interpretation of his teaching is obvious — that we should overcome evil with good, hatred with love. The reinforcement of this meaning, in bidding us turn the other cheek to the smiter, can mislead those only who insist upon a literal rather than the natural interpretation. All such examples — as to giving, lending, etc.— are illustrations of the operations of love, a love for even our enemies and that looks for no return, like the love of our heavenly Father.

The Gospel Uncompromising.

The supposed difficulties of the children appear to be aggravated in a complex and artificial system of civilisation. Their difficulties do not arise from the impracticability of the Gospel life, but from the hardness of the worldly system. It is a part of the burden of Christians that they must seem to wear the masks of the world. In this they are following their Lord, and what others call difficulties and problems, are to them sufferings whereby they are associated with him in the redemption of mankind. Because of the resistance which they meet, because of the sharp points constantly piercing their hands and their side, the more do they need to fall back upon the divine wisdom and to respond to that wisdom with child-like faith. Some hour may come to them so dark that they cry out, as did their Lord upon the Cross, feeling themselves abandoned of God. But they are being glorified. It is their love and their suffering which is to soften and subdue the world. They know not how or when, but that surely the kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. Their life is not of their own determination; they are led in living ways. Theirs is a hidden life, and yet they are forever witnesses to the living truth, believing in the vitality of communication. You will not, at a glance,

observe any outward characteristics distinguishing them from others. They throng every one of the world's busy thoroughfares. You will find them among the rich as well as among the poor, though their hearts are not set upon wealth; among those who accept responsibilities in worldly affairs, who win though they court not public favor and esteem; among the conscripts of all armies, industrial or military, though their heart is moved only by the divine ardor that is in the strife; and among those who are misguided by the traditions of men. If we could look into their hearts, if we could follow them to their homes and into all the ways their love makes among men, we should be translated into the Optimists' world — into the Kingdom of Faith. For they are a great multitude, constituting an invisible association, reinforced by all the loving ones on earth or in heaven — they are in the blest Accord, living the divine life, caring not for the accumulation of worldly possessions or for worldly prizes, but only for the loving familiar association holding them to Nature, to Christ, and to Humanity. The secret of their life is their childlike faith in the Real Presence. They are in heaven, for unto them worldliness is a mask, forever showing its hollowness, its tenuity. And there are crises when this mask is shaken by some divine violence, and when their witnessing becomes conspicuous, and the invisible association is for a moment disclosed, terrible as an army with banners.

FIRST BOOK

FROM THE BEGINNING

FROM THE BEGINNING

I

LIFE is your master, Beloved; and your understanding is but the servant thereof. It is the divine life — with divine laws, a divine type, a divine meaning — though ye call it yours; and, whatever your conscious determination, individually or associatively, ye cannot escape its mastery.

Mastery of the Divine Life.

It is as a garden given you to tend; but what is your tendance to its large unfolding, which ye control not: all its flowers and fruits, its perfumes and spices and balms, its gems, its winds and its streams, its skies and its seas,— its quivering warmth and tendernesses in the familiar sunlight, and its cool and solemn stillness under the stars! When your hands and feet are weary and your eyelids droop, it foldeth you in its sleep like an infant, and still hath for your utter weariness its complete enfolding.

Of this life, which ye call yours, but which is divine, ye may not touch the laws, which have always their full operation, yet ye may mar its type and darken for yourselves its meaning; but the field of your conscious doings and undoings, of your constructions and mis-constructions, of your antagonisms and dissipations, of your problem-making and problem-solving, is unto this life as an island unto the ocean, which tolerateth it, yet overwhelmeth it with its currents and tidal waves, cleansing it betimes with its healthful storms, and shaking it with its mighty convulsions.

While thus limited in his conscious activities, yet man seems infinite in capacity. He can do so little, yet can he receive all. How little way his hand reaches, yet his vision takes in the stars. Answering to the paradox in physics, by which a column of water, however small, balances a column of water, however large, is the spiritual paradox, by which the soul, as receptive, stands over against and balances the universe. It is a mystery which is not to be expressed in the speculative conception either of the Pantheist, who makes God all and the individual an illusion, or of the Idealist, who makes the Ego all and the universe an illusion. It is a simple vital truth — and, like all such truths, incapable of analysis — that the divine life has its ultimate type in the conscious individual soul, which, though not independent, is yet free, though not making for itself any living way, is yet capable of choosing or refusing,— an answering type, since man is made in the image of God; and through this correspondence, which is spiritual, man not only has God for his portion, but has also the capacity to comprehend the meanings of all life, from the earthly, which is at his hand, to the heavenly, which is brought nigh unto him, even into his heart.

In our spiritual as in our bodily existence all vital functions are of divine ordinance and continuance. We may consciously co-operate with these, or we may disguise and pervert them; but, as by taking thought one cannot add to his stature, which he buildeth not, so can he by no conscious effort contribute directly to his spiritual growth — the increase must be from God. Indeed, in this view, all life is spiritual, and it is only because of our disguises, misconceptions, and ignorances of the meanings in what we call the material world that we distinguish between matter and spirit.

Life is your master, Beloved; and yielding to this

mastery, with open heart leaning thereunto, ye shall be filled with life and shall be satisfied — ye shall be folded in the bosom of Everlasting Love.

For there is nò life that is not of Love — which, in the visible universe, is the flame of suns, begetting life in all worlds, and, in the invisible, is the flame of the Spirit.

But, if ye shut your hearts against this life, this love, still will it follow you, and that which, being received, would bless you, shall seem like a pursuing avenger, before which ye are flying into outer desolation. For your understanding, which ye, by strange inversion, have made the master of your straightened life, shall be as a prism refracting all light, so that ye shall call those things evil which are but the shadows of the one great sin which ye confess not, and ye shall call those things good which are but the false images of the one Good ye have forgotten — the Presence from which ye hide yourselves.

II

Yet, Beloved, ye shall hear in your Garden, however far from Eden, in the cool of the day, the voice of the Lord God, asking "who told you that ye were naked?" striving with you against that other voice which hath put you to shame and confusion, or hath filled you with empty pride, unto worse confusion.

The Two Voices.

Lo, these two Voices have striven with man from the beginning, the voice of the Lord God saying:

"I am the Father of spirits. I have breathed into thy nostrils, and thy life is of my life — thy light of my light. Whosoever hath faith in me, my life and my light shall be sufficient unto him. Behold, thou wast a child, wrapped in my love as in a deep, untroubled sleep, naked, yet

not ashamed. And I gave unto thee all things in the Garden wherein I walked with thee. But thou hast sought a way for thyself, to walk by thine own strength, following the subtleties of thine understanding, which, separated from the heavenly light, creepeth forever upon the earth. Thine eyes have been opened, and thou seest only by this outward light, remembering only that thou art dust and that unto dust must thou return; of all thy precious heritage possessing only its earthly, perishable portion, in weariness of flesh and weariness of soul. Turn again unto me that ye may have eternal life!"

But that other Voice repeateth still:

"Thou art naked — gather thee fig leaves. The vengeance of God is upon thee, and a flaming sword standeth between thee and thy lost Eden, guarding the fruit of the tree of Life. Hide thy face from the wrath of God. Henceforth thy hope is in thyself and in thine own devices. By thine own strength shalt thou conquer the earth, and by thine own wisdom circumvent a jealous God, wresting fire from His very heaven, and shalt by seeking find the secret of all knowledge and power. Rejoice that thine eyes have been opened and that thou art now as the gods, knowing good and evil."

III

And all merely human philosophy has been an echo of tnis latter Voice,— only that shame has given place to pride, and the name of God — even the mention of His wrath — has no longer a place in its oracles. This philosophy, beginning and ending in the phenomena of man's individual consciousness and volition, has, following the voice which first disclosed his nakedness, made for him also an impenetrable solitude.

The Pride of Intellect.

This is the ultimate subtlety of that false knowledge which has no life in it — that, as an individual, thou art so sequestered that the distance of the farthest star is no measure of thine absolute separateness from all other existence. And upon this solitude is built up for thee a tower of pride.

For, in this analysis, thou art the centre of the universe, and nothing can reach thee save in the disguise of thine own sensibility: there is no sound but in thine ear, no light but in thine eye — beyond all is darkness and silence. Thou art the Agrippa's mirror in which all things appear, and the world is nothing save as the embodiment of thy thought. All mystery is centred in thee, and to thee, as to Œdipus, the Sphinx can propound no riddle but that thou canst answer by naming thyself. Thou art the measure of all things; and thou measurest all, from the dust at thy feet unto the stars in the heavens.

IV

But thou that seemest to be thus exalted, how art thou in reality abased and limited!

Thy life is made a series of illusions haunting the desert of thy solitude; yet art thou denied the illusions of hope. This philosophy translates all realities into notions; knowing only outward obligation; making of thy freedom a choice between paths that all alike end in the grave; nailing thee to this planet, roofing thee in from heaven, and yet holding thee fast to the worm and the fire of thy torment; glibly naming all things under the sun, yet unable to utter the name of God, of the Soul, or of an Endless Life.

Limitations of the Understanding.

For this mental analysis touches only the finite and measurable. The meanings of Nature escape its calcula-

tion of proportions, velocities, and distances. In the presence of Life the Understanding is baffled. Here indeed a cup is held unto her lips like that which was given unto Thor in Jötunheim to drink from, but which he could not exhaust, because of its connection with the inexhaustible sea: nay not one drop thereof can she drink, since neither the motive nor the meaning of life is within her grasp. Here she hath neither mastery nor interpretation, but must take the place of a servant, blind and dumb, save as informed and inspired by a light and power, which, within her own limitations, she comprehendeth not.

V

LISTEN, then, Beloved, and open your hearts to the Spirit which striveth with you. There are no devious ways by which, through the efforts of your will or the questionings of your understanding, ye can find God. Here there is no indirection. There are no barriers to be scaled. There is no problem to be solved, concerning either your guilt or the divine justice. It is that other Voice which tempts you to some sacrifice, some penance, some pilgrimage; which binds you to your burden, or goads you on to an endless search, which is endless flight from Him. It is this flight which is your error — the sin of which the Spirit convinces you, if ye turn unto Him, but accuses you not, since it is the Spirit of Love. So closely He follows that but to turn is to return unto Him, the Comforter. It is only that ye should be still, and ye shall hear His voice. It is only that ye should drop your burden, and ye shall find rest. It is only that ye should forget yourselves, even your guilt, and He shall visit you — that ye should lose your life, and ye shall find it. The readiness is all.

The Direct Way.

To return is to repent. It is only when the prodigal son looks into the loving face of the father, who, even while he is yet afar off, hath come to meet him, only when he feels the embracing arms about his neck and the kiss of greeting upon his cheek, that he cries out of his sin and unworthiness. He has resolved to do this; but it is only the Spirit of Love which convinces of sin, and this He does in the very moment of absolution. For it is love not judgment which answers you — nay, rather, which has besought you long and which ye at last have answered.

VI

The Spirit of Love is also the Spirit of Truth. For, as light is from flame in the visible world, so in the invisible, is truth from the flame of the Spirit. And thus shall your eye be single and your whole body full of light, because ye see no longer with divided and partial vision, which discloses only confusions and inversions and fractions of truth, but by that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The earthly vision is informed by the heavenly, and, your eyes being truly opened, ye have knowledge not of good and evil, but only of good.

All Truth is of Love.

VII

The soul of man is ever haunted by intimations of an ideal life, which once inhabited Eden or shall sometime inhabit Heaven. It is true that the conception of this ideal life is in some respects fastidiously eclectic, preferring the arbitrary constructions of the human imagination to the divine ordinances of Nature. But, by all who believe in a divine life, it is

Man's first Estate.

conceded that man in his first estate must have been in complete harmony therewith.

We can form no conception of the vitality born of this harmony, either on its active side as love, or on its passive as knowledge. Man was the child of God, heir at once of heaven and earth; but his regard was always heavenward, and all his earthly life was caught up into this divine vision. Imagination like a vital flame illuminated all realms, in her spontaneous flight easily overleaping the barriers of sense, wedding the visible to the invisible; and, following as a reflex of this illumination, there was flashed upon the mind the knowledge not merely of laws but of inward meanings — a knowledge which is direct interpretation, having the character of divination.

We associate with such a life perfect freedom from solicitude, and so absolute spontaneity of all movement that the element of consciousness — even the consciousness of liberty — is scarcely apparent. We behold man, at the same time that he is immediately and fully recipient of the divine life, also most closely linked with Nature, his activities having that spontaneous, unerring character which we associate with all natural operations and with what we call the instinctive processes of animal life. We behold him the leader of all terrestrial life, and also, through the correspondences of a marvellous divination, in touch with the life of all worlds.

Whether this be man's first estate in a historical or only in a logical order — whether the centre of harmony be fixed in the remote past or in the remote future, it is certain that there has been an immense wandering.

VIII

THIS wandering of man is the great world Epos. Its origin is known only to Him who alone seeth its end. There is — and in the very nature of things there can be — no record of a Golden Age. It is only in the face of death — of failure — that men build monuments. Outside of Sacred Writings, our first glimpse of man upon the earth is that of a wanderer, eating the bread of his own or others' toil, enslaving others or himself enslaved, a tyrant or the victim of tyrants. History is the record of human strife. Civilisation itself is gladiatorial, a complex system of selfish competitions. It is assumed that life is of necessity a ceaseless struggle of man against Nature — of man against man. Peace is only an armistice — a balance of menacing powers; and in its semblance of security men laboriously cultivate science and the arts, and elaborate their systems of morals and jurisprudence, or else relax all effort in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures and luxurious ease. The inheritance of the earth, if we regard the testimony of history, is not through love but through conquest. The links with nature have been broken; and there are but fragments and hints of a higher life — the faint reminiscences of a state of simple innocence. Vitality is no longer the pure white flame of man's impassioned nature aspiring heavenward; it glows into ardors that smoulder. Consciousness is dominant in the regulation of life, with its false shame, false pride, meaningless conventions, confusing disguises. The grace of free spontaneous activity is displaced by what we call taste, manner, tone — the results of training. Theories that begin nowhere and end nowhere, vain speculations, futile analyses, have taken the

The Epos of Human Error.

place of a divinely informed wisdom. Imagination is shorn of her wings, and there is no longer true divination.

But this Epos is not fully expressed in the annals of history, nor in the monuments of art which time has preserved, nor yet in the religious memorials of past generations — the menhirs and dolmens, the temples, images and tombs: these are the records of hardness, frailty and decay. The best of any life escapes record. Its fragrance and beauty and song, its joy and its pathos, are too evanescent for memorial. Here and there, in the Vedic chants or the Homeric poems — transmitted from generation to generation through the living voice, and at last by some happy chance committed to writing — we catch faint echoes of the vanished youth of the world. Other hymns beside the Vedic were chanted at sunrise, and in other lands, but they have not lingered for our ears. We have a glimpse of the heathen priest Melchisedec, who was nevertheless the priest of the Most High God, in his casual meeting with Abraham, with his offerings of bread and wine. But who were his people, and what hymns may they have sung? Where are the unsung Helens and Andromaches, Antigones and Electras, the uncrowned women of the olden time? They have vanished, as have also the chivalry and tenderness they inspired. And of the endless procession of children — of babes and sucklings out of whose mouths is perfected praise — we have but the glimpse of that throng which in the temple shouted hosannas to the Son of David.

The divine life is not excluded from this Epos — it is indeed the largest power therein. The children, though wandering, escape not the close-following, ever-besetting love of the Father. Degeneration there has been, and mortal failure; but ever from the beginning this infinite love has bent down to man's decaying life and with its re-

viving breath has awakened it into whatever of freshness, beauty and glory it has shown. Even as His flowers have ever the freshness which they had in Eden, and His sun and His rain fail not, so His love never wearies, but it knocks at every door — in some ways beseeching, in some compelling, in some even submitting, in all waiting with the untiring patience of the Bridegroom.

IX

Of the divine life itself there are no differing dispensations. God's attitude toward fallen man is the same as toward man in his first estate — the same essentially, though we express it differently, because of the change in us. Grace was from the beginning, even in Eden, but, as related to fallen man, we call it saving grace. The divine love remains in all its fulness; but, as a following love, denied, betrayed, and crucified, it differs, for us, from a love fully received. There was always the kingdom of heaven, and its laws — the laws of the spiritual life — remain forever the same. The life of unfallen man was renewed every instant by the Spirit dwelling within him; but the new birth by which degenerate man is quickened we call regeneration. The Spirit which dwelt in Adam because he was in harmony therewith strives with every man to find in his heart a dwelling-place. Only through this Spirit, and through the unfolding of spiritual meanings in the visible world, did God reveal himself unto Adam. Man in his first estate had no light save that which lighteth every man that cometh into the world — only he comprehended the light.

Grace is from the Beginning.

Moreover, the divine attitude toward man was the same before the coming of our Lord as afterward. The dispensation which we call Christian, while it is the special, is not

the only dispensation of grace. In its largest meaning the Christian dispensation is not limited to any time.

The Word was from the beginning the Son, since Sonship is not of the flesh but of the spirit, and, even as the Messiah, is eternal, since from the first he has been Sent. There never has been any visible appearing of God but through the Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." Always it has been true that "he who hath the Son hath life."

X

Always, then, Beloved, it is the Word which leads all men unto the Father — not the spoken word alone, but the Word which was from the beginning. But it is not until we are quickened by the Spirit of God, which ever strives with man, that we know either that whereunto we are led or the divine sweetness and strength of the leading. Thus the leading Word and the quickening Spirit are forever revealing each other, so that, if we follow the leading, the quickening virtue enters our hearts; and the Spirit which quickens forthwith impels us into the living ways of the Word — showing us the Christ.

The Spirit and the Word.

XI

But is not God sufficient unto Himself that we must see the Christ?

Verily He is sufficient unto Himself, so that He need not have created anything. But He delighteth in manifesting Himself, and every manifestation of Him from the first creation is a showing of Christ, the Eternal Word.

The Divine Delight in the Christ.

And the delight which God had in creation — for, when He saw everything which He had made, He saw that it was good, and there was in Heaven a Sabbath festival — this delight hath been repeated with each new manifestation; it is His pleasure in His Son: so that from the beginning our Lord hath been the Master of every Feast — the everlasting Bridegroom. And especially exultant, so that heaven overflowed therewith, was the divine rejoicing over the Son of God become the Son of man, Emanuel, because herein was expressed the ultimate embodiment of the divine love. Him therefore especially the Spirit glorifieth.

Nevertheless, all the years of the world have been the years of our Lord.

We may not limit the divine love to any chosen race, or to any period of human history. Every soul that has lived has been surrounded by the divine light, has been within reach of the heavenly harmony — if there were but the eye to see, the ear to hear. Upon the sensibility from without, upon the soul from within was there always the pressure of God's love, encompassing, uplifting.

"Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," is the plaint of the divine Spirit from the beginning. It is not man who hath wrestled with God for a blessing, but God who hath wrestled with man to bless him.

XII

Not only is there the extension of the kingdom of grace, so as to include all humanity from the beginning, but there has been in every age a human response to the divine love.

Man's love toward God has ever been of his choice. His faith is the willing acceptance of the divine life, the

free surrender of his will to the divine will. This freedom of faith is so precious unto God that by no revelation or manifestation of Himself does He ever violate it.

Human Love Begotten by the Divine.

"I will arise and go unto my Father" is in all ages the language of faith. The repentant son thinks not of righteousness — of anything which he can do to merit approbation or to avert judgment. The Father's love is so close upon him that it begets only love. There is no arbitrary compulsion of his returning steps; but his very willingness, his hunger for the bread of life in place of the husks upon which he has been feeding, are a response to the inviting Word and the quickening Spirit; even as the flowers turn unto the sun because its rays have pierced their hearts. There is a willingness deeper than any conscious consent — the willingness of the spirit, and, when this has been won, all outward rebellion is a "kicking against the pricks."

In its very depths, below all conscious regulation, man's spiritual nature is at once the highest manifestation of the Eternal Word and the peculiar field of the operation of the quickening Spirit. Herein is the vital current uniting us with the life of all life. In this view, man is instinct with God even as Nature is, as directly and as intimately, all the deeper currents of his life being as divinely impelled as are the movements of the tides or the courses of the stars.

Only the spirit comprehendeth the things of the spirit. The full significance of any divine revelation is only of spiritual discernment. The Word, without us and within us, is a leading toward such revelation, a preparation therefor, a lisping of its vocabulary. The soul has thereby been led to name the Unknown; it has been made to feel the bond holding it to the Unseen; it has been borne upon a current springing from some hidden source, so that it has the feeling of a destiny not to be expressed in terms of the

understanding or even of conscience — a something which it cannot consciously apprehend, but which it feels as comprehending the totality of Nature and Humanity. But when the willingness of man's spirit answers to the operation of the divine spirit, there is the spiritual illumination — the new birth. Then the Spirit and the Word are united in the human consciousness. Then the leading, hitherto hidden, is clearly seen. The centre of all harmony has been reached, and God, Man, and Nature take their place in a newly discovered kingdom, binding them all together — the kingdom of heaven. Then, and not till then, "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." That which has veiled God now reveals Him. Even the material partakes of the spiritual, being seen as the garment of the All-loving One; and the touch of but even so much as its hem is healing.

XIII

But, even in the unregenerate, there is the development of a spiritual nature, notwithstanding its limitation and perversion. Man may abandon God, but God will not abandon him; there is the throbbing of the divine life in every artery of his corrupted heart; the name of God it is that is nearest the lips of even the blasphemer.

The Religious Instinct.

The consent of man's will is not necessary to the mastery of this divine life in his spiritual nature; and to his unwillingness this mastery seems a compulsion. Whether with or against his will, the divine purpose will be fulfilled in man as in the world; in the universal scheme the Eternal Word compels him. He may give or withhold his heart — love is of choice. His attitude of readiness or

unreadiness is within the scope of his freedom. The Word will be glorified; he may freely determine whether he will share that glory as a child of the kingdom.

To the persistence of this divinely impelled spiritual development is due the universality of what we call the religious instinct. We see a development which is the ground of faith, but yet is not faith and is even consistent with infidelity. Without it there is no conception of God as the Father; it is the way, the only direct way within us to the higher life; yet it is not that life. By reason thereof it is impossible for man to separate himself from God, yet it does not of necessity involve a comprehension of Him as the only Good. Of itself it has not hope — it may be determined wholly by fear. It is the ground of all morality, yet it may be immoral — the ground of the sentiment of human brotherhood, yet it may lead to fratricide. It is the way of light, yet it may grope in darkness — of life, yet it may generate corruption.

XIV

Conditions affecting the Development of Ancient Faith.

Of the ancient generations of men scarcely anything has escaped oblivion save their religious memorials. The religious life seems to have been for every soul a necessity. Offerings were made by Cain with murder in his heart as by Abel with meekness. But where the record is the fullest and clearest, the evidences of a decaying faith are most abundant. Where the structure of ancient civilisation is seen at its strongest, we find also the most lifeless religious formalism and a worldly hierarchy. In Judea the prophetic movement was constantly breaking up the crystallisation of the national strength and of the Levitical system and its imposing ceremonial; and it is because of this structural

weakness that the Hebrew faith stands to-day alongside the Christian — a living spiritual influence through all time, surviving the Temple and its ritual.

In those peoples and in those periods that exhibit the most firmly established worldly system we are not permitted the vision of a simple faith; the gladiatorial habit of life, the preference of material good, enter into and affect religious expression. In such a system fear is easier than love, and is assiduously cultivated by the priestly order, which finds in it the readiest means for the exercise and maintenance of its own power. The feud which is only in man's bosom, and in which the All-loving One could have no part, is yet transferred to God, who is conceived as an angry deity to be propitiated. Selfishness leads to further misconception, and man expects God to abet him even in his cruelties, to help him conquer his enemies, to conserve to him the fruits of his injustice, his very slaves. Pride enters also, and he thinks to buy a blessing, or to earn it by some meritorious action or penance, instead of simply giving his heart. Men readily conceive God after their own systems, which are inversions of the divine order. They make for themselves codes based on the idea of evil as injury, and they affix penalties corresponding to the injury. It is but a step from this to the thought of God as a Rewarder and Punisher — not in the sense that righteousness by its own law is blessedness and unrighteousness misery, but in an arbitrary sense, dissociated from and even contrary to the operation of all law.

This degeneration of faith has in all ages the same tendency — toward self-righteousness, Pharisaism, and an elaborate religious ceremonial; and these are all associated with the grandest achievements of human pride. Alongside the pyramids are the ruined temples.

But where are the multitude, in all this show of strength

and solemn splendor? Where are the myriads of slaves, who, under the lash of the task-masters, build the pyramids? Where is the long procession of them whose chains alone bear witness to the triumphs of the conqueror? Where are the miserable ones who, beating their breasts, appeal not unto a just God to behold their righteousness, but only unto His grace? Where are they who are so fortunate as to be victims instead of victors, whom God's love has chastened, breaking up their idols, their hardness and pride, and sending them to sing their sweet songs by the waters of Babylon? Where, in this dim retrospect, is the vast throng of them who out of the shadows look forward unto the Cross (for, bearing the weight of every woe since the world began, it is not from them entirely hidden) and cry, "Behold, O Lord, we also suffer and are Thine"?

XV

The most important of all the conditions affecting the spiritual development of mankind has been sorrow.

In death, the common lot of all, even the rich and the strong have beheld the despoiler of all their vain shows. Against the inevitable calamities which shatter or dissolve the works of man's hand — earthquake and tempest and flood — no human power has availed. These lessons of Nature, who is no respecter of classes or persons, as to the frailty of all human power and possession, have profoundly impressed all hearts. Loss has led to precious gain.

The Office of Sorrow.

But the greatest of human sufferings, those which embitter all life, have been of human infliction. The situation of the great majority of mankind in ancient times — those of which we have any definite record — was one of abject wretchedness. Arcady existed only in the poet's fancy. In

a state of barbarism men's wants were few and simple, but their passions were violent, and for the weak there was no security. Every desirable garden upon earth was a bait to the rapacity of conquest, the arena of invasion following upon invasion, like the waves of a hungry sea. Civilisation, on the other hand, was organised selfishness; and its peace was, for the great body of the people, a level desolation. Their lot was one of humiliating drudgery, of depressing, hopeless poverty.

But it was especially unto the poor that the gospel of the Eternal Word was preached. To such as these the voice of God comes nearer, because it is more willingly and gladly heard. The broken heart is open; there is no pride to close the way thereunto. An angel whispers in the ear of every slave, and upon him who hath nothing all heaven waits.

Sorrow, too, lies near true repentance, even as the broken becomes readily the contrite heart; pride has no place in its chastened and subdued mood. The soul, weary of struggle and of its own discontent, receives the divine voice, and is comforted. Even one's ignorance may help him here, in this soft, unresisting attitude making him more readily the recipient of the divine wisdom, more pliant to the counsels of the Spirit of Love.

It is all wrong in our human estimate — the oppression which has desolated, the slavery, the ignorance; but where these have brought man into extremity, there has been the divine opportunity. He who has been knocking long at the door of the heart is let in and takes possession. And his voice, once heard, who shall resist? It has a sweetness beyond the sweetest sounds of music. His shining face is that of the heavenly Bridegroom. To the suffering of the soul his long-suffering answers. The garden of toil and bitterness becomes the garden of his

love, and the mint, broken under weary feet, gives forth a sweet smell.

Such is the divine visitation unto the poor in spirit; and its power abides in strength, comfort, rest. Sorrow in this loving presence is turned to repentance and rejoicing. All wounds are healed, and the thorny path is full of light.

But we may not look for the perfection of faith from this visitation. The heel which bruises the serpent's head is itself bruised thereby. The Vision and the Voice that have saved man from despair have been marred through the imperfection of his seeing and hearing. Man's freedom is in no wise disturbed by the divine appearing. But he has been helped. Though even inspiration and prophecy have been disguised by the human mediation, they are none the less from God, and none the less effective for their divine purpose of comfort and hope.

XVI

Prophecy.

When, through great sorrow or anyotherwise, one is brought into a living way, and submits to the mastery of the divine life, his mental questionings cease, and he gives himself up to be utterly weak and foolish, that he may have the divine strength and wisdom. In his waiting and his silence, he beholds the burning bush, and himself experiences the baptism of fire; he is caught up into the vital current of divine love—the flame of the Spirit; and what he shall say, it shall not be of himself, for he shall prophesy.

His freedom is not disturbed; indeed, then only is he free when he is caught in this living way. We call a man free when he takes his life in his own hands and regulates it according to a system of his own construction; but this is in truth his prison-house.

But what is it, Beloved, to be in living ways? It is to give up everything for life — to reverse all the lines of direction which ye have followed away from those of the divine leading. It is to give up the loose, disjointed fragments and phantoms of what ye call your life — all your mental subtleties and vain imaginations — all the traditions of men; to get away, if need be, into the wilderness, where one, confronting life in its simplest terms, may clearly discern between that for which he hungers and thirsts and the heavenly portion offered him, where he may boldly face his greed and ambition, and put them behind him — though all the kingdoms of the earth be within his vision and grasp — and then be ministered unto by angels, that is, by God-sent impulses and vitalities. It is to live by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God. Thus was it with Enoch and Elijah, who, caught in these living ways, were so exalted in their life that even their death was represented as a divine rapture.

There is in these ways no mysticism; though hidden from the wise and prudent, they are clear to babes. They are not narrow or austere. They have not the solemnity of the temple, but rather that which taketh the child in the broad noonday, or when a large place is opened unto him. Whosoever toucheth the divine life, even in the humblest of creatures, and receiveth it — it is unto him the gate of heaven. There is here no comparison as between the little and the great. From or unto the least is from or unto all.

Ancient divination, in its most corrupt form, was always an augury from movements not under conscious human control — from the oppositions and conjunctions of stars, from the flight of birds, from dreams, from the random utterances of children or of the insane, from the wild oracles of a phrensied priestess, — from happenings of any

sort. There is in this a suggestion, at least, of the spiritual truth that all life is inter-correspondent, and that its deeper meanings are independent of volition and consciousness. We reach the full truth when, in the place of this consultation of fortuitous correspondences, we substitute the spiritual interpretation of all meanings through the divine life within us.

The prophet gives his vision as he sees it. Whatever imperfection there is in his seeing will appear in his communication, which, while it has the divine impress upon it, has also that of the individual personation. The divine exaltation of the human medium is not of necessity its perfect illumination. There are all degrees of clearness, from the vagueness of Orphic vaticinations to the heavenly might and pathos of the poetry of Isaiah. Jonah prophesied the destruction of Nineveh, and was vexed that his prophecy was not fulfilled; and the lesson of the gourd was needed that he might comprehend the infinite pity of God toward even a heathen city — even toward its "much cattle."

Outside of the Vedas, there is in all sacred writings nothing to be compared with the Hebrew prophecies. As already indicated, it was the prophetic movement which preserved the vitality and simplicity of the Hebrew faith, transforming and spiritualising the Mosaic law, and antagonising the state religion of Jerusalem. The synagogue was a characteristic prophetic institution, representing the spiritual freedom of the people. The prophets, therefore, naturally incurred the hatred of the holy city. "Thou that killest the prophets," was our Lord's reproach, when he wept over Jerusalem.

We are too much inclined to ignore this antagonism, and to even especially glorify the very features of Judaism which the prophets deprecated. In like manner, and for

the same reason — that is, because of our higher estimate of outward strength and of mental and ethical culture than of spiritual truth — we, in our consideration of other ancient religions, lay more stress upon state ceremonies, upon the fastidious eclecticism of culture, upon the fables of poets and the dialectics of philosophers, than upon the popular faith.

Thus, when we consider the Chinese religion, it is Confucius and Mencius who are put forward as its representative exponents. For the formal expression of ethical truth there are no ancient teachers who excel them. They enjoin obedience to parents, fidelity, benevolence, honesty, sincerity, truth, justice — softened by the precept that men should recompense injury with good — and reciprocity, according to the golden rule to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. Such a system, recognising no obligations that are not ethical, became naturally associated with the state religion of China. On the other hand Lao-tse, in some respects the highest spiritual teacher of antiquity, is almost entirely excluded from our consideration.

Our conception of Hellenic spiritual development, also, is generally such as might have resulted from a casual visit to Athens in the time of Pericles, from conversation with Plato, from listening to a trilogy of Sophocles or the Homeric recitations of the Rhapsodists, or from a glimpse of the splendors of a Pan-Athenaic procession. Athens, the eye of Hellas, blots out Eleusis, which is its heart, and Pallas-Athene eclipses Demeter.

Really, however, it is only in the popular faith — notwithstanding its perversions — that is shown the profoundest spiritual life of any nation. Individual prophets may have been especially inspired as leaders of the popular movement, but it will be found that they have somehow grown

out of the movement itself, out of an impulse divinely communicated to the whole; and, while they are God's chosen ministers, they are chosen because they are found nearest the vital current, caught in some living way.

XVII

Such ministers were they — at once Prophets and Poets — in whose hearts were born and on whose lips blossomed into song the ancient Vedic hymns. In these we come nearest to the first beginnings of Aryan faith, in the face of the Sunrise. These hymns for ages were not committed to writing, but were passed from lip to lip, in a living tradition, existing only as they were sung — the direct utterances of a household faith, when households themselves were not as yet established in fixed habitations, when life was nomadic, free as the winds and the streams, and immediately respondent to Nature. They were chants sung at sacrifices, in the open air, at sunrise and noonday and sunset, but especially at sunrise, about the family altar, when as yet there were no temples and no fixed hierarchy. They have the naïve simplicity of childhood, frankly asking for all material good — whose only delight is in the using. They are the expression of a simple faith like that of the Psalmist of Israel when he singeth, "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." There are heavenly folds this Shepherd hath, corresponding to His earthly folds — but in the vision of these prophets there is but one fold, comprehending all, and one Shepherd. Man is inseparably linked with Nature. We find here a divination of all that science can ever disclose, even when it shall have been spiritually informed, respecting the correlation of forces. All life is flame. The Sun is God's witness, the symbol of the

The Vedic Hymns.

invisible flame, which is also the principle of life in all that lives, and has its symbol also in the sacrificial fire.

Here also do we find the primitive significance of sacrifice, which is not a propitiatory offering, but a feast, where God, the friend, the brother, the associate of man, becomes his guest. In generating the sacrificial flame by the friction of two pieces of wood, (the *arani*,) man is evoking under his own hand the divine principle; and his offering of bread and wine consumed and ascending is received by God as a token of human co-operation with Him — of the human life blending with and uniting its strength with the divine. There are no misgivings, no expressions of fear, but only songs of exultation because of this intimate and sacred association — a communion, in which all the renewing, illuminating strength of the universe is concentrated for the expulsion of darkness and death.

XVIII

In these hymns we are introduced to polytheism in its simplest form.

The diversification of God, in man's thought of Him, is as natural as God's diversification of Himself in the variety of His manifestations. It is a process corresponding to the development of language itself, and follows the changes incident to that development; so that, while the first personifications of divinity are concrete, they afterward, like language, represent also abstractions; and this later representation is persistently retained in poetry. Personification, before it becomes a conventional habit, is a spiritually vitalised expression, bearing witness to a spiritually vital impression.

Spiritual Origin of Polytheism.

The modern man is very far removed from the spiritual feeling of Nature. His observation is either scientific, to

find the law of phenomena, or æsthetic — that kind of feeling which prompts the painter to reproduce a landscape upon his canvas, or a trained mind like Ruskin's to follow with delight and most delightfully to describe the traits of a stream from its source to the sea or the transformations of clouds from morning until evening, the description being closely confined to the content of sensibility. Far different was the feeling of the primitive Aryan poet. He followed not lines of thought or of distinctively æsthetic interpretation, but the lines of life. He instinctively felt what science ages afterward demonstrated — the unity of all force. The butterflies would have botanised for him, and his unconsciously noted generalisations, based upon their habits, would have been surer than those of Linnæus. He cared neither for precision nor for completeness, but only for vital suggestion — vital, not as being useful or of moral value, but as having spiritual meaning. He questioned Nature not with his mind but with his heart. It was a loving regard by which he touched the life of God; and his soul answered thereunto. He took Nature to heart.

Now, whatsoever is taken into the heart of man in this loving way remains no longer that which it appears to the closely scrutinising eye. Imagination, "the vision and the faculty divine," has been awakened, as in the lover it ever is, and one sees not by "the common light of day," but by that light "which never was on land or sea."

The coming of the Dawn is a great spiritual reality to these who meet it with their Vedic chants. As unto the Psalmist, the Sun seems to come forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber. Not only doth he reawaken and renew all earthly life, but he brings near the divine life with its cherishing warmth. All the earth responds to his loving call and especially all soft things, the dews and

the waters, ascending, in beautiful shapes, lightening, exhaling, expanding, and vanishing into his glory.

The night, with its cold and distant stars and its deep calm — the hushed inward breathing of all life — is the solemn background of this daily repeated Resurrection scene, this ever fresh Appearing of the Lord. Through the chant and sacrifice, man leads all the earthly responses to the heavenly awakening and quickening. When, against the darkness of night, first flushes the bright Dawn, rude and fresh and cool — with a calm drawn from those deeper heavens which now he hides with a veil of rosy light, a calm answering to that which in all earthly breasts still lingers from the depths of sleep — when his awakening kiss meets the dewy lips of Earth, coolness for coolness, after long waiting: in this shyly opening tryst, it is the voice of man that utters in song the quiet joy of every living creature, greeting its newly risen Lord. The low wind which now stirs and whispers — this, in man's heart, is the way of the Spirit. And as the Bridegroom ascends, being lifted up from the earth, he draws all men unto him; all life follows him, rising unto the noon-tide of blended earthly and heavenly pulsation, so that nothing escapes his brooding love — "nothing is hid from the heat thereof"; and in this following pomp man leads, as representative and respondent for all the earth; it is unto him especially that the Spirit and the Bridegroom call.

This intimate association of the human and divine has in it no element of strangeness, so long as it is real and vital. There is no line of separation to note where ceases the human or where the divine begins. And especially when a man has joined the invisible throng will his sons and his grandsons regard him as divine; and thus arose what we call the worship of ancestors — falsely so calling it, if by worship we mean more than is implied in this rec-

ognition of the divine familiarity. But when the living sense of this association is lost, in a later period, the idea of it still lingers, a cold and lifeless notion; the idolatrous worship halts along what was once a living way; an awe-inspiring sorcery takes the place of all the witcheries of tender and caressant love, and repellant spirits, still called "familiar," leave the warm sunshine behind them, and frequent the dark ways communicating with a world which has no existence apart from human fears.

But in this era of the Vedic hymns, neither priestcraft nor the fears upon which priestcraft thrives exist as yet. It is the Prophet's voice that is dominant — true to the note of joyous triumph — so that man has, in divine fellowship, a joint hold upon even the lightnings of heaven, and rejoices in the thunder, having only that fear with which the child loveth to be afraid.

As in this period there is no fixed hierarchy, so there is no definite system of divinities, like that of Olympus, and no strict demarcation between one impersonation of a spiritually moved imagination and another. The *Nomen* — given from love and embodying a spiritual suggestion — has not yet become a fixed *Numen*, ready for æsthetic imprisonment in statuesque form, for the cruder fashioning into an idol, or for the still more degrading limitations of fetichism. The readiest diversification of God is most naturally consistent with the spiritual idea of His oneness. All the divine personages of the Vedic hymns are united in the conception of Indra, the First Born, the creator of heaven and earth, the saviour of men. He resides also in the human heart — he inspires the chant that is sung unto him. There is a more spiritual intimation of this divine oneness in the conception of Vak, the Word, which is before all, which hath free course in all worlds, and showeth men the path of sacrifice — that is, of fellowship with God.

A sense of the all-pervading divine life implies that of its essential unity, and is also the basis of that inter-blending of the human with the divine which readily endows the former with divine attributes and conceives the latter under human limitations. The later developments of Hinduism and Buddhism are in this view easily understood, the avatars of a Vishnu and the apotheosis of a Gautama being the natural offshoots of the same faith.

XIX

To live upon God's every word, which, though inarticulate, is none the less a means of intimate communication with Him — to see Him in all that is visible, and to recognise Him as the source of all life — this was the simplest form of Aryan faith. Each separate word of this divine language was capitalised, (what we call personification,) because it was taken to heart and magnified.

The Spiritual Ground of Metempsychosis.

This faith has no asceticism, no contempt of Nature or of life. It is afterward — when this patriarchal simplicity has been left behind, and men have made for themselves fixed habitations, fixed forms and systems; when the human is divorced from the divine, and there is pride in the structures which man has made and in the life which he has contrived for himself, rather than joy in the divine fellowship, and a close following of living ways — that man glories in penances as having in them some special strength of his own, preferring a human to a divine virtue. The heavenly is no longer blended with the earthly, but flies away therefrom; and man's conceptions of a future life, shaped by his pride in himself and his unconscious contempt of God, are removed as far as possible from any similitude to Nature.

As in the period of the Vedic hymns we find, in the tendency to magnify each particular manifestation of divinity, the basis of polytheism, so do we find here, in the satisfaction of faith with its God-given environment, the ground for the subsequent development of the doctrine of metempsychosis.

All spiritual meanings are unfolded from the beginning in the divine manifestation through the everlasting Word — so they be spiritually discerned. In one of the Vedic hymns we find this strain: "There is one who seeing seeth not the Word, and another who hearing heareth it not; but whoso receiveth it with loving heart, his union therewith is like that of the bride with the bridegroom." They who readily discern the meaning in the natural embodiment thereof lay little stress upon the supernatural, as a separate and distinct world. So long as God is felt to be everywhere in His world as He has made it, He is not sought elsewhere in a world of man's imagining. Holding to Nature as a living, flowing reality, soft as wind or water or flame, the soul has safe moorings; but when it has made of this nature a lifeless, hard and inhospitable coast, it for safety puts out to the open and unfamiliar sea. The divine ever wooes us to familiarity with itself. "He that seeth and breatheth and comprehendeth, taketh meat with me," saith the Word, in another Vedic hymn. When the human soul refuses this persistent suitor, and sets up for itself, it builds not only a Palace of Art but a magnificent Temple of Faith, which, in every part of the structure, is a denial of God and Nature, and which it devotes to the Supernatural.

Yet it is with great difficulty that the supernatural has secured any firm hold upon the heart of man. In all ancient religions the earth was the centre of all movements, of flight as of return — even as the mists, to whatever heights they may rise, always return to the sea. It is only within a comparatively recent period that Tartarus and Paradise have

been quite removed beyond the circle of the earth. The Hebrew, even in the utmost reach of prophetic vision, conceived of a future life only as following an earthly resurrection. Of the Sheol or of the Paradise which intervened between death and this resurrection there was no definite shaping in his thought, which was wholly occupied with the glories upon earth of the Messianic kingdom, a kingdom which, in the prophetic conception, was to include all peoples.

So joyous was the intimacy of the primitive Aryan with Nature that he could not have conceived of a life destitute thereof. The glances of departed ones met him in the sunlight, and he heard their breathing in the wind. It was a simple, formless faith — an instinctive clinging to Nature as the only divine life which had been revealed to him — having no resemblance to the elaborate system of metempsychosis which grew out of it in Brahmanism. He thought of Indra not only as First Born but as "born many times"; and he would more readily regard human destiny as forever closely linked with Nature through repeated submission to her ordinances of birth and death.

There is in all of us something which answers to this older instinct binding us to the earth. Though death may seem for each the consummation of a rite by which Nature is immolated at the shrine of the Supernatural, yet the curtain falls, and we are left in doubt. The one brief life seems but a small segment of a great arch, and for its very explanation demands all the future as well as all the past. Even though we long for release — and there has been developed in us this other tendency also, toward flight, toward heaven as an exchange for earth through some sudden translation — can we be sure that our escape from the familiar bond is any part of the divine scheme? Has what we call the supernatural life, which for the most

part we have shaped to suit ourselves, a stronger claim than the life upon whose endless renewal there is the divine impress? Is it more than an ever repeated illusion — this release of man, through death, from Nature, and his attainment of the Supernatural?

Raphael in the Farnesina palace painted pictures representing the various scenes in the legend of Psyche — the Hellenic type of the aspiring human soul — from the first exposure of the maiden upon the desert mountain to her marriage with Eros in heaven. Yet, looking upon this marriage, we seem to wait as for the breaking of some spell at the very acme of the realisation of Psyche's dream, when she shall find herself again exposed upon the mountain, again to be borne by the Zephyrs to the strange palace, where she is again wooed by the invisible god, and again — after the repeated sin of forbidden knowledge — wanders in search of her departed lover, till again the grand illusion of triumph is repeated, and so on, life after life, forever.

The expectation of re-incarnation has in all times been especially associated with the world's heroes. Thus Arthur yet waits in Avalon to rule Britain, as Holger Danske in the Hidden Isle to deliver Denmark. Charlemagne sleeps under the Untersberg, waiting to liberate France, and Barbarossa in the subterranean vaults of Kyphausen's castle, till his beard shall have grown through the stone table before him, when he will again appear, a terror to his foes.

XX

What in the beginning was a simple instinctive response to divine suggestion in Nature became in later times, in the system of Brahmanism, a fixed doctrine. Life itself had changed, and had become an imprisonment of the soul,

so that the human heart protested against the endless iteration of this bondage. This protest found voice in Buddhism. Asceticism in various forms had already been developed; and the reader of the Upanishads will find there in speculative form all the essential tenets of Buddhism. But Prince Gautama gave these tenets a new form, crystallising them in his own wonderful life — a life made still more wonderful by subsequent legend. The picturesque and dramatic incidents of his career, from his renunciation of his royal estate until his death at an advanced age; his fully rounded system of teaching, directly imparted to followers personally attached to him; his abolition of caste, and his minute regulations for the conduct, or, rather, for the extirpation, of life, gave him a place in Eastern faith which no other man, if we except Confucius, ever occupied. He accepted the entire Hindu pantheon and the doctrine of the transmigration of souls; but, contemplating the hard conditions of human life, and considering that death itself was no release; reasoning also that, if God were good, He could not be all-powerful, or, if all-powerful, He could not be good,—so that man could not look unto Him for help,—he determined to find a way for humanity out of its distresses. The only path was one out of all life — an escape from all divine manifestation and from human operation and consciousness. Hence the Gospel of the Nirvana. The ultimate and only possible blessedness must be the extinction of existence. It could not be called a faith, unless Atheism be a faith. But it was consistent. Turning his back upon what he acknowledged to be divine ordinances, he never at the same time professed to exalt God, nor was he so vain as to think that he could propose other and better ordinances in the place of those he rejected. His gospel of religious Nihilism was as methodical as it was

The Protest of Buddhism.

radical. He diligently "turned the wheel of the law" that he might surely find the way to reverse all the processes of Nature and destroy desire at its very source. He preached the thorough contempt of life, and, finally, the contempt of the very processes — the renunciation and the mortification — for its extinction.

It is wonderful that a religion so negative should have held sway in India for eighteen centuries; and it was not until, through the wealth and magnificence of its monasteries, it had denied its own negations, that the older system of Brahmanism, with its divine avatars and human re-incarnations, swept it away.

XXI

Hellenic Development of Faith.

It is a long leap from the early Aryan faith, as represented in the Vedic hymns, to that of the Grecian branch of the same race. Here we have no record reaching back to the primitive simplicity and freedom of a patriarchal period. We confront at once a fixed polytheism and a dramatic ritual. We find indications of a once dominant prophetic influence — associated with simple household rites — in the Orphic fragments,* but long ago the poet and the priest have supplanted the prophet. The personifications of divinity have taken each a definite shape, and there is a complex system of polytheism because of the blending together of many peoples, each having its own

* In the following Orphic hymn, we recognize the characteristic Vedic strain:

"Render us always flourishing, always happy, O household Fire! Thou who art eternal, beautiful, always young, thou who nourishest, thou who art rich, receive our offerings with good will, and give us in return the happiness and health which are so sweet."

divinities. If we might trace each separate line of faith back to its source, we should reach an era of simplicity, having something of the free atmosphere of the early Aryan communion with Nature. Apollo would stand in the place of Indra. We find not only a complex polytheism, but an equally complex system of myths expanded into legends — afterthoughts of poetic or popular fancy — confusing the simpler suggestions of Nature.

These Hellenic peoples have had a history, and we have to take into account distinctively human influences, like those of the heroic age, as modifying faith. We have to distinguish between Hellenic and Pelasgic elements — the one flowing, the other fixed, but both Aryan; between the political religion and that of the sacred Mysteries; between the freely developed life of the colonies — the Ionic especially — and that of the mainland, adhering tenaciously to old traditions.

The development of Hellas is a representative drama of humanity, whether we consider its religion, its polity, its art, or its philosophy. Its faith takes us back to Egypt and Asia, and reaches forward to Christendom. In the evolution of its political life, it foreshadows all possible forms of government. There can be no æsthetic construction or criticism which does not refer first and constantly to the Hellenic types of Art; and in Aristotle and Plato we have the mirror of all human speculation. The brightest example of ancient freedom, Hellas sought not the mastery of the world. It was over the ruins of Grecian liberty that Alexander proceeded to the establishment of his Grecian empires in Asia. The history of Hellenic civilisation is a complete arch, not of iron but of gold, frail but beautiful, the type of heroic aspiration and of intellectual subtlety — as represented by Achilles and Ulysses — rather than of sincerity and spiritual strength. We are permitted

to see not only the rise of this great confederation of states and its consummate glory in the age of Pericles, but also its decay, through the operation of the very forces which exalted it.

XXII

Development of a Hierarchy and of a Dramatic Ritual.

From our first approach to this complex human drama, it is its Hellenism which impresses us — the spirit of heroism, beauty and song. The time is gone by when the gods held familiar converse with men — that remote era spoken of by Plato in his *Kritias*. There is a distinctively human handling and shaping of the divine life. The men and women of the heroic age claim kinship with the gods, but it is the claim of aristocratic pride.

If we could look back beyond this Hellenic dominion, we should discover the earliest priestly brotherhoods, which doubtless arose, as in Egypt, contemporaneously with the institution of caste. The organisation of the sacred Mysteries by these brotherhoods succeeded to the simplest form of Nature-worship, corresponding to that which found utterance in the Vedic hymns.

The characteristic peculiarity of the earliest priestly, as of the earliest royal, caste was its exclusiveness. The priests accordingly gave to the Mysteries the sanctity of inviolable secrecy. A human institution had taken the place of a divine inspiration. Religious worship, withdrawn from the open air, hid itself in the Mysteries, and had its nourishment in the dark; its divinities were veiled and immured. If there was a tendency to hide what was sacred, there was a corresponding disposition to hold in awful reverence what was hidden.

The more a religious sentiment is embodied in a palpa-

ble structure, the more necessary is the association with it of mystery, to give it dignity and authority. The Shekinah, which is the visible presence of Jehovah, must needs be enshrined in the Holy of Holies, to which the High Priest himself has access but once a year. The Egyptian Apis, the incarnate representation of Osiris, had its secret enclosure in the temple at Memphis. When the emblems of a god are lodged in a sacred ark or in a sacred basket, as in the ark of Osiris and the Eleusinian *cista*, familiarity with them must be forbidden. The privileged class which is made the depositary of sacred things is invested with more than kingly power. Achilles stands by the priestly Calchas rather than by the royal Agamemnon; and it is to be remembered that sometimes, in this dark epoch, human sacrifice — as was the case between this same Calchas and Agamemnon — was a possible result of priestly divination, and such a diviner was regarded with no common awe.

As the priest assumed the fullest initiation to the Mysteries, he exercised the highest hermeneutical capacity. He above all others was endowed with the gift of divination. However trivial the tokens — be they only the flight of birds or the phenomena attending sacrifice, before or after, or if indeed there were no token whatsoever, but only some divine afflatus peculiar to certain localities, as in the case of the oracles at Delphi, Dodona, Abæ, and in the Trophonian Cave — yet the decree was imperative.

The influence of these oracles is incalculable. They were the active centres of political as well as of religious movement. Cities were built and colonies founded at their suggestion. Every dilemma in which men became involved, if advice was asked of the oracle, was made a fresh occasion for further suggestion. The stuttering Battus has no sooner come within the range of the weird Pythoness's vision at Delphi than he is arrested on the

spot and his affairs peremptorily settled for some years to come. "Battus, thou art come about thy voice. King Apollo hath need of thee in Libya in the way of a colony."

It is not until men have made a complex life of their own, and have established that life in fixed forms, in cities and institutions, that they make an institution of religion, confine their divinities within temples, and surrender to a priestly order the deepest meanings of their faith, and a distinction is made between esoteric and exoteric interpretation.

The change which has taken place is momentous. In a simpler life man was more receptive in his attitude toward God. The divine was everything, filling all unto overflowing. Now the human has taken the divine in hand — the priest, or *mystagogus*, leading, and giving what he will, and in what shape he will, unto the multitude.

The sacrifice, which at first was a loving communion, begins to have associated with it the idea of propitiation. The theological conception of mediation is born, taking the place of the direct approach to the Father, and the priest is the first mediator. The primitive Aryan communion was but a step from that of Eden, but what a remove is this second step in the degeneration of faith!

At first the priest, in this conventional organisation of society, simply follows a tendency already existing, and for which he is in no way responsible. He has the same right to the *thyrsus* that the king has to the sceptre — a right voluntarily accorded. But the tendency is reinforced by both king and priest — the latter having this advantage, that his dominion reaches not only to all the crises of life, from the cradle to the grave, but beyond death into the unseen world.

In the primitive age of faith, all Nature was a divine drama, and man seemed to himself to be a participant in

its glorious procession. The spiritual conception of the divine life was so large and luminous that it easily accepted as its embodiment the entire universe. But now a humanly shaped system of faith finds its dramatic expression in an elaborate ceremonial, connected with the initiation into the Mysteries, and in splendid processions. Having but the semblance of faith, the multitude is satisfied by outward shows, secondary and remote symbols, and a firmly established material structure.

The ritual and the symbols, though obscuring, have not entirely lost their spiritual meaning. But, under priestly direction, the dramatic expression of faith has been shaped with reference to a profound and awe-inspiring effect upon the outward sense.

In Greece we have no record of the celebration of the sacred Mysteries before the incorporation with them of distinctively Hellenic elements. It is, indeed, only as Hellas that Greece has a history. And this Hellenism is so conspicuously dominant, through its heroic and æsthetic impulses, in all political institutions, in all public games and festivals, in the political religion, in literature and art —in all that is characteristic of Greek civilisation, that only as the result of the closest scrutiny can we comprehend the strength of the older Pelasgic faith.

XXIII

Herodotus and others claim that from the Egyptians, as being the most ancient people, the rest of the world received all religious institutions—sacrifices, divinations, festivals and processions. Such a tradition, though not necessary in order to account for these institutions, has in it doubtless much truth. While everywhere there was a local development

Pagan Tradition.

of religious worship, there was also the modification of it by foreign tradition. Evidences of such tradition are abundant in the earliest records of Greek civilisation.

While the tendency of any civilisation in its first stages is not only toward stability but also toward an isolated and exclusive local development, this provincial crystallisation of life is never permitted to complete itself. The divinity, in the pagan conception of his purposes, was never favorably disposed to the full flowering of any human stock upon its native soil, but rather favored transplantations, with repeated interruptions and new beginnings of growth. Even as the builders of Babel were dispersed, so through his oracle, as we have seen, Apollo sent the stuttering Battus from his island home in the Ægean to the deserts of Africa.

In the remote past, before Greece was Hellenised by successive waves of invasion from the North, the Mysteries existed, in connection with a ceremonial and a hierarchy of which we have no definite record. In Attica and Arcadia they probably preserved their ancient integrity until the Dorian Invasion—nearly a century after the siege of Troy. To the end, Dionysus and Demeter kept their place in the hearts of the people, while the Olympian Apollo and Athene remained as the bright stars of a firmament that overarched the heroic past.

Many mythologic personages had come, before the strictly historic era, to be but the faint shadows of their original reality in human faith. Thus had passed away the first sacredness of the homage paid to Kronos and the Titans, with its dread hints of human sacrifice—an homage which still lingered in the worship of Neptune. Rhea was almost forgotten, so fully had Demeter taken her place; and Aphrodite had degenerated from her Uranian title and estate.

In this confused system of Greek polytheism, we find our way only by the light of dim constellations, groups of mythic names, as to whose antiquity in time, or mutations in space we are quite in the dark. These divine dynasties, like the human, are forever passing out of view into the baths of the Western sea. Thus the Titans pass, and the Olympians hold their place in the upper sky — just as have passed the Inachids at Argos, giving place to the Danaids; while the returning Heraclidæ, with the Dorians in their train, have entirely changed the face of the Grecian heavens.

XXIV

The Heroic Element in the Sacred Brotherhoods.

The Hellenic aristocracy of the heroic age prided itself upon its Olympian ancestry. Nestor was grandson of Neptune; and all the Æolids contemporary with him — including Helen and Clytemnestra — were only eight generations removed from their Titanic ancestor, Prometheus. Achilles was the great-grandson of Jove, and his sobs by the seaside draw to him his divine mother, the silver-footed Thetis. In the Homeric epics, the gods participate in the strife on the field of Troy, and attend Ulysses in his wanderings. But this familiarity with the gods was not that of the golden age; the association is due mainly to human pride — even more so than the analogous mingling of human with divine personages in the Hindu Mahabharata, which retains much of the spiritual significance characteristic of the primitive age.

The Hellenic enthusiasm — the feeling of the divine in the human — was a heroic rather than a spiritual sentiment. And this strain enters prominently into the religious development of the heroic age, its effect being nowhere more apparent than in the sacred brotherhoods. Coinci-

dent with the apotheosis of the hero was the divine exaltation of the hierophant, to whom was attributed a supernatural wisdom. The Homeric Calchas knew everything — what had been, what was, and what was to come. He it was who directed the Grecian fleet to Troy, piloting the divinely heroic craft by a divine steerage.

It would be interesting to trace the history of the sacred brotherhoods as organised about the hierophants of Dodona, Thebes, Samothrace and Eleusis, and especially to make acquaintance with those of Olympus and Parnassus — for it was about these that the tide of heroism rose highest, reaching with its refluence to Asia on the one hand and to the Pillars of Hercules on the other — to the Hyperboreans in the North and to the Ethiopians in the South. But we find few indications of these fraternities until nearly 600 B. C., when they branch out into world-wide connections. During the preceding centuries — the twilight of Grecian history — all the movements preparatory to the historic dawn, whether religious, political, philosophical or artistic, had their beginnings in these mystic brotherhoods. This preparation was going on mainly in the North at first — in Thrace and Thessaly — but its movements kept pace with the Hellenic advance southward.

XXV

The Orphic Sect.

We first especially note this new departure in the Orphic sect, which originated in Thrace, Orpheus himself being a Thracian prince. According to Plutarch there was a resemblance between the Orphic ritual and that of the Edonians and Thracians at Mt. Hæmus. Passing from Hæmus to Pieria, we find Orpheus the leader of the Pierian brotherhood. Here he sang, died, and was buried. He was also

the acknowledged founder of the brotherhood at Parnassus, whither, it is said, his bones were removed for a second interment. Either with this removal or with some transference of Apollo's worship — probably with both — the centre of sacred interest was shifted from Olympus to Parnassus, where Apollo was the enshrined god and Orpheus the inspired prophet.

The elements comprising the Orphic movement were brought together from widely distant sources through various traditions. We find traces of the mysticism of Egypt and the wild phrensy of Phrygia, and with these were blended the Cabiric legends which were so widely diffused throughout Greece. Thebes also rendered her tribute. Osiris, Dionysus and Apollo seem blended into one — the features of the last, in this early stage, being dominant, as in the other Hellenic brotherhoods. The heroic association is evident from the prominence of Orpheus in the Argonautic expedition, which he celebrated in epic verse.

A remarkable feature of this sect was its connection with poetry. The Muses were the sisters of Orpheus. The brotherhood consisted of bards, among whom was Hesiod; and, from the spread of the sect eastward in the Ionic migration, we may account for the tradition that Homer was an Orphic.

Identified at first with the prevalent Hellenic worship of Apollo, the sect became afterward associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries, through the Orphic Eumolpus. The association was probably only legendary, but the legend is significant as showing the tendency of all religious institutions to connect themselves with the old poet and prophet, and to claim an Orphic leavening.

But this Orphic influence in Greece was very different from the prophetic movement in Judea. Instead of deepening the spiritual current of Grecian life by breaking up

its hierarchical constructions and by counteracting its heroic tendencies, it allied itself on the one hand with a more complex system of theology, of a mystical and allegorical character, and, on the other, with the intellectual forces which were finally to undermine the entire religious structure. It was, in the one case, the reinforcement of a humanly shaped ritual, preferring it to a divinely impelled drama,—preferring also human saints and heroes to the divine saviours; while, in the other, it was to lead in a movement which could only end in the substitution of intellectual and moral for spiritual development.

Thus, as we approach the historical period, we find special rites of purification coming into vogue, under Orphic auspices, and more complexity of detail in mystic ceremonies. The conscious imagination has more scope. A new importance is now given to the mystagogue. Orpheus is clothed with new attributes, and an allegorical significance is attached to his descent to Hades and his rescue of Eurydice, as also to the restoration of Alcestis by Hercules—since these are made the signs of a saving power vested in saints and heroes. Certain eminent saints become centres of special interest and hope by virtue of their holy life. Such an one was Aristeas, who was reputed to have been several times marvellously raised from the dead. Such were Thaletus and Epimenides, the latter of whom was invited by Solon to purify Athens, preparatory to his legislative reforms. Among the Thracians, Zamolxis was worshipped, it being believed that he was removed from earth for the space of three years, after which he appeared again among men, teaching them the doctrines of a future life. Through one sign of divinity or another, whether through some supposed miracle or by virtue of their extraordinary purity of life, these saints became centres of special sects, in all of which the old Mysteries were continued with their Orphic

modifications. Thus the disciples of Epimenides were Orphic, as was also the Pythagorean sect, springing up a little later in Italy. It was in this way that the Orphic tenets and ritual had so wide a spread, and that Orpheus held so large a place in the representations on sepulchral vases in lower Italy. When the Pythagoreans were so widely diffused in Greece and her colonies they still retained the Orphic worship of Dionysus.

The imagination, though it has taken quite freely in hand all the elements of faith, is still held spellbound to the temple-shrines, but a change has passed over the faces of her divinities, which have in them more of the brightness of Apollo.

Science and Art, that have hitherto slept in the sacred enclosures, awake under the Orphic influence; but their awakening is like that of Eurydice, who unsteadily follows the spell of her lord's music, being at the same time held by a spell which binds her to the lord of darkness. The Orphic movement has still some trace of its nursing in the far North, (through its connection with Apollo, whose oldest tradition associates him with the Hyperboreans,) the ancient home of sorcery and enchantment. The earliest development of Grecian philosophy — especially among the Pythagoreans, who had an elaborate system of magic — is full of indications of the weird spell still holding man to Nature, as to a sentient world, with which he has communication not through living and luminous ways, but through the devious intricacies of astrology and necromancy.

When the Delphic oracle fails — that mighty sensorium of the ancient world and centre of a thousand thoroughfares of fate — there is established in its place, under the auspices of the intellect, a sort of mystical *rapport* with the universe; and, in the place of the wild Pythoness, certain philosophers stand as the especial Magi of Nature, (like

the mediæval Paracelsus,) having power both to sway the forces of the material world and to interpret their deliverances. And what natural magic was to the Pythagoreans, that Plato's "reminiscences" were to him, and, to Socrates, his Dæmon.

XXVI

But about this mysticism there is the lambent flame of a fire which will finally consume its elaborate structures. In the Orphic and kindred movements tremble the nascent impulses of a Titanic revolution. The forces which are first manifested in the modification of the sacred Mysteries will move on to their destruction, and also — after the brilliant efflorescence of Hellenic heroism, art and philosophy — to their own annihilation.

Beginnings of a Reaction: The Titanism of Art.

It would seem as if Apollo — hitherto, on all heavenly fields of conflict, the champion of the Olympians against the Titans — had left his ancient shrine, only to lead this new and mighty rebellion against all shrines.

The Dorians have brought with them into Peloponnesus the song and dance associated with their worship of Apollo, and have transferred it to the Dionysian festival, instituting the Chorus. But in time the monotonous chorus becomes tiresome, and a diversion is introduced by Thespis.

It is the Homeric influence — representing a distinctively human impulse — which is the source of this diversion. This Thespis, the first histrionic artist of Greece, while he is a Dionysian evangelist, whose part it is, on his extemporised stage, to tell the story of the saviour god, is also a Rhapsodist. It is but a step from his recital of a divine legend to the fully developed drama of an Æschylus, in which the interest is shifted toward a human centre.

All this progress is within the walls of the old temple. The altar is still there; still are the sacrifices offered; and the Chorus keeps up its accustomed dance about the altar, with strophe and antistrophe, but its song is in sympathy with the Titanic Prometheus, and the Dialogue carried on by the actors little concerns itself with the old sacred story. The heroic impulse, with a wholly human interest, is becoming dominant. First it looks back to its remote source. Burning Troy is ever in the background of the Grecian stage. Æschylus confesses that his plays are only fragments from the splendid banquet of Homer. But a more recent source of heroic pride is soon found in the victories won by the Greeks against the Persians, and thus has entered a new meaning into the older strain of triumph. It is the glory of simple heroism — as proud of the annihilation of its own forces at Thermopylæ as of the annihilation of the enemy at Salamis — and not that of a people ambitious for empire. No legion of a Cæsar was ever impelled by the spirit which mastered the Grecian youth when they marched forth with curled and perfumed locks to meet the mercenaries of Xerxes.

The perfection of Grecian Art in architecture and sculpture was also through the imagination, impelled by this same heroic impulse. But the temples and statues wrought by Phidias and his contemporaries were devoted mainly not to the divinities presiding over the Mysteries, but to those associated with the political religion — to Olympian Jove, Apollo, and Mars, and Pallas Athene, and to heroes like Theseus, the Hellenic Arthur.

The martial inspiration is not in sympathy with that drawn from Nature, though in the end it fulfils a divine purpose. That this discord was apparent to the Hellenic mind is shown in the legend of the marriage of Venus with Vulcan, the latter of whom, in this fable, represents Nature.

It was a forced marriage, and the affections of the goddess are easily diverted from her limping consort to the more beautiful Mars. In like manner is the human soul, under heroic leadership, easily lured from what seems a compulsory bond holding her to Nature, whom she regards as an unworthy spouse. But sooner or later the despised Vulcan draws his brilliant rival within his all-embracing toils.

Though the brightest and noblest guise of a fallen soul, this heroism is an already dimmed glory, which must soon be laid aside along with its stained and tarnished armor. As the sword rusts, so fails the hand which is strong for strife alone. In the flaming ardor of Hellenic heroism, there is not the strenuous grasp, the hard, unyielding firmness of the gladiatorial Roman; and it is therefore that in its train follow Homer and Pindar and the great dramatists, and Phidias and Praxiteles — a pomp of Beauty and of Song such as the world has not since seen. But the ardor consumes itself, and all its radiant following vanishes in the strife which called it forth. The gentler spirits waver; the Nymphs retire to their woods and streams; and Pan, who for a moment is heard to sing the odes of Pindar, is frightened by the echoes and retreats to his native wilds.

The Hellenic victories over Persian invaders are soon followed by a long and demoralising civil war, and finally the pride and glory of Greece are trampled under the feet of the Macedonian conqueror.

XXVII

The poet and the scholar linger long beside the monuments of this glorious period of Hellenic civilisation. The Hellenic type of man, at its best, has much to remind us of its Asian prototype. It had a finer development than in the civilisation of India that prototype ever

reached. If the simplicity of the early Aryan faith could have been retained, there would have been shown on the shores and among the islands of the Ægean as wondrous an example of spiritual as we now behold of æsthetic and intellectual development.

Perils of Institutional Development.

But civilisation is the touchstone of humanity, and especially of humanity in its associative activity. The moment institutional life is inaugurated, the peril is imminent. It is not that civilisation is begun in ignorance, as we commonly understand ignorance. Reading and writing are unnatural. Homer was illiterate, but, in an important sense, he was the greatest educator of Greece. It is the lack of divine wisdom, when men have given up the divine fellowship, that is to be deplored. It is through the operation of self-will — of man's will divorced from the will of the Father — that civilisation is the revelation of human frailty; and it is in what seems most fixed and stable — in what are apparently the strongest structures of man's creation — that this weakness lurks. To one looking back upon the history of any people, this is manifest; but they who build the monuments of human pride are blind to this weakness. Blessed is the people which, generation after generation, has a school of prophets to break up these structures and to call men back with Isaiah-like yearnings to the love of the living God.

But the prophets of Greece exercised no such ministry. Instead of breaking up a formal religious ritual, they added, as we have seen, to its complexity. They danced and sang around the old altars. By and by the ambitious strain entered into their song, and human heroes displaced the gods in their discourse; the Thespian pulpit widened into a stage; the temple of Dionysus became a theatre; and the divinity, excluded from his own shrine, retained his sacred attributes mainly in his connection with the

Eleusinian Mysteries. Prophecy ministered to the martial and heroic pride of Greece. It was an exaggeration of self-will. It was not a new spiritual force breaking up old forms. The disintegration of sacred foundations was, indeed, a part of its mission; but this process went on through the substitution of human for divine constructions, from an æsthetic rather than a spiritual impulse; and it was finally completed through intellectual analysis and negation.

XXVIII

Coincident with the Titanism of Hellenic Art was that of Hellenic Philosophy, impelled by the same overmastering pride.

The Titanism of Philosophy.

During the century from the birth of Plato to the conquest of Alexander, Athens was the intellectual centre of the world. To one passing from the Piræus, with its outlook upon the Ægean, to the Acropolis, with its Theseion and Parthenon, and thence through the streets of the city, the spirit of Pallas Athene seemed to brood over all — over the gay and busy multitude of the Agora and over the impassioned multitude in the Theatre; over every marble statue, every grove and garden, and spreading out over the summer sea.

The nearer association with Asia had introduced luxury. The very freshness of heroic sensibility gave a relish to the incoming feast of Persian dainties as well as to the endless round of exciting pleasures and amusements. Here was no languor, no dull apathy; life was yet young and generous, quickly appreciative of beauty and keenly alive to the allurements of the festival, the rhapsody and the drama. It was holiday with Athens. Happy they who at such a time were enrolled among her citizens! Whether they

were artisans, poets, philosophers, or archons, all were glorified by the common exaltation. Democracy seemed inevitable — forced upon them by irresistible decree.

Hitherto Hellenic genius had coruscated at the extremities of the colonial domain — now gleaming forth from Smyrna and Ephesus and Miletus in the East, and now from Crotona and Elea in the West; but at last the artists and the philosophers have found a home in Athens. The approaches of the philosophers were timid at first, and with good reason, since Anaxagoras, their pioneer, had been driven from the city for having asserted that the sun and moon were as unsentient as stones — so strongly did these Athenians still hold to the idea of a divinely animated universe!

Besides the arrivals from abroad, there was, in the time of Plato, a large brood of native philosophers, calling themselves Sophists. Up to this time philosophy had been limited to physical inquiry — not an investigation of phenomena with reference to laws, but a mystical guessing at the hidden cause of things. The Ionic school had resolved all into the four elements; the Pythagoreans had introduced a less material principle in their theory of Numbers; the Eleatics had reached the idea of a primal Essence; and Anaxagoras had conceived of a conscious mind as the universal cause. With this last conception, the subjective principle in man received a special exaltation.

Then it was that Protagoras enounced the proposition that "Man is the measure of all things." The Sophists, adopting this proposition, not only made man superior to material limitations, to social usages, and to religious restraints; but, in doing so, ignored man's spiritual nature, giving his intellect the supremacy.

Notwithstanding the shallowness of this scheme, and the

vain subtleties by which they supported it, the Sophists had a large following. Teaching the arts of popularity, they drew about them every aspiring youth; and the influence of their teaching is illustrated in the career of Alcibiades.

Socrates, having carefully measured the influence of the Sophists, and calculated its danger to the individual and the state, yet never directly opposing them, though constantly entangling them in the meshes of their own logic and making them wonder at their capacity for every Protean transformation of falsehood, insensibly drew away their youthful adherents, in whom he awakened a wholesome self-knowledge — using the same method which the Sophists had abused, and endeavoring through philosophy to restore the Will and Sensibility to their natural sovereignty. His disciples, Plato and Aristotle, followed in the same direction; the latter giving to science a rational method; the former building up an ideal system of the universe, which, as an intellectual scheme of a purely speculative character, has no rival in ancient philosophy; while at the same time he reached a height of spiritual contemplation never attained by any other Pagan writer.

But it was not in the power of philosophy, even under such leadership, to arrest the movement which was undermining the structures of Grecian faith and life; it rather accelerated the movement. At the very time when Protagoras was expelled from Athens for questioning the existence of the gods, and when Socrates was compelled to drink the hemlock for his supposed impiety, the system of faith was tottering under its own weight, and was being betrayed by its sensuous alliances; and, before another century had passed, criticism had reduced mythology to a simple explanation of natural phenomena. Scepticism, moreover, easily overthrew the logical pillars by

which the higher nature of man had been bolstered up in the Socratic philosophy.

Already the Peloponnesian war, with its constantly recurring irritations, had blunted the sensibility of the preceding age. To this had been added the corruptions of a perverted democracy, preparing the way for complete political extinction.

Whatever had been the tendencies of Art and Philosophy, in their relation to faith, toward the final ruin, they were a part of the accomplishment of the divine purpose. There is a divinity in the decay of the old as in the birth of the new. In any adequate view of the great cycle, of which particular national growths are but parts, we see what even the rust of Time is worth, and that the corrosiveness of human thought, when it gets the better of action, doing away with the symbols of a halting and decrepid life, is quite as natural and necessary as is the utter decay of the fallen forest leaves through the action of the very force which gave them their springtime verdure.

XXIX

The Popular Faith expressed in the Sacred Mysteries.

But what are the Sacred Mysteries — which were the expression of the deeper religious sentiment of the Grecian people, the undercurrent of all the movements we have been considering?

We have now to turn quite entirely away from Olympus, which is so conspicuous in the poetry and cultivated thought of the Hellenic world.

What a bridgeless chasm separates the spiritual from the merely intellectual comprehension of God! The one regards Love, the other only Force. The one is as near as the sun, the other as remote and cold and alien as the stars. Such a gulf separated the gods of Olympus from

the saviour gods—the divinities of Pagan intellect from those of Pagan sentiment. Each of the Olympians was doubtless, at first, a saviour—the response to the yearnings of a spiritual faith. But in historic times they are, nearly all of them, as far removed from the sentiment which first conceived them as are the constellations of heaven from human sympathy. They retain only their power, a power still associated with the operations of nature, beneficent or destructive, but alien as Destiny. They determine all things and behold all, but have no care.

Still the sentiment remains. It is no longer accompanied by the sense of intimate fellowship; there has been a growth of the fear which hath torment; but alongside with this fear has arisen hope also; and, therefore, this sentiment is a longing for the nearness of a divinity bringing help and comfort—a longing which finds its response in loving and saving Powers, which, while they may not alter the decrees of Fate, yet interpose between humanity and those far-away gods that are "careless of mankind." These saving Powers are the gods of the Sacred Mysteries. They are not new divinities—their distinction is that they retain their old vitality in the human heart, their near relation to its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears.

The Olympians have lost this vitality. They are the gods of peoples that are restless and migratory, and they reflect the character of their ever-shifting worshippers. Olympus is not their home, but only a habitation assigned them by the poets, who are as free in the legendary handling of them as Aristophanes is in making them the subjects of his travesties. The fact that this free treatment of them was tolerated is an illustration of their religious insignificance.

The Promethean legend, as developed by Æschylus, is the natural counterpart to the Hellenic conception of

Olympian sovereignty — a supremacy of force not free from guile. It is characteristic at once of the insincerity and intellectual pride of this Hellenic race, that it should first conceive the divine dynasty after this manner,— as jealous of the race of men and plotting its destruction,— and, then, that the salvation of mankind should seem possible only by the interposition of an intelligence capable of outwitting the supreme arbiters of destiny. Certainly no spiritual meaning could be attached to such a deliverance.

But, whatever the poets may have feigned, or whatever philosophers may have hoped, touching the possible redemption of man through intellectual progress and the arts of civilisation, the hearts of the people, seeking some better assurance, turned away both from the relentless Olympian dynasty and the scheme of intellectual salvation, to the gods of their living faith, who in all times of tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, would surely deliver them. Even Socrates, who was never initiated into the Mysteries, before his death sacrificed to Æsculapius.

XXX

The Reality of Pagan Faith.

For Paganism was not a theory, but a life. In its first estate, it was, as we have seen, a life of intimate communion with God through Nature. There was no concern as to the ultimate purposes either of Nature or of human existence; so that man held closely to the divine life, walking in living ways, this life would take care of its own issues. The Earth beneath him and the Sun above were the two great Presences, representing the compassionate Motherhood and the brooding Fatherhood of God. Whatever lay beyond this charmed circle could be interpreted only by that which

therein germinated and blossomed and ripened in the throbbing, palpitating warmth of divine love. Night, Winter and Death were but like the gulf of sleep, over which one passes restfully from Eve to Dawn. There were no mental questionings to be answered. The nearness, the fulness, and the endless renewal of life were the basis of spiritual satisfaction.

When this divine drama — the direct manifestation of God through the Eternal Word — is no longer satisfactory, and, together with the establishment of the priestly order, the mystical drama of the Mysteries is developed, we find in the impersonations of the latter, in its symbols, and in its humanly shaped ritual, a limited and formal representation of the truths which had most profoundly impressed man's spiritual nature, when, in the simplicity of his faith, he was the witness of the larger, divinely shaped drama,— nay more, a direct participant in its open and joyous celebration. The nearness and intimacy of the divine life were represented in the two principal divine personages of the Mysteries, Demeter and Dionysus, who stood for the two great Presences, the Earth and the Sun. These personifications preceded any legend, or any mystical drama figuring it forth; they grew out of a deep feeling which found no adequate expression short of this most tender embodiment of these divine Presences in human shapes, bringing them in this way still nearer to human hearts, even as their new names were more familiarly and lovingly taken upon human lips.

So, too, it was with Persephone, who was necessary to the completeness of the vital reality in the human heart and imagination. In all Nature there are never two but there is a third, the Begotten. As in Egypt the popular faith included the Three — Isis, Osiris and Horus — so in Greece there are Demeter, Dionysus and Persephone. But

in relation to faith, this daughter of Demeter is mainly significant not as representing birth but repeated birth, as being Lost and Found. The solicitude of the ages is expressed in the old question, If a man die shall he live again? The restoration of Persephone to the light from the darkness of Hades was an answer to this question, in so far as an answer could be given by the hope-impelled and divinely led imagination — an assurance that death is no more the end of life than is winter the end of the flowers that rest under its snows.

Thus far — in these impersonations, and in the story of Persephone's seizure by Pluto and her restoration by heavenly powers, which is the fundamental gospel of the Eleusinian Mysteries — there is no departure from the simplicity of a primitive faith, but rather a deepening thereof, and a fuller fruition. It was still a living faith, quickened by the Spirit, and led by the Everlasting Word, whose manifestation of the Father in the human heart meets and accords with all natural unfoldings.

XXXI

The Systematic Development of Faith inevitable.

Nor, when we proceed a step farther, to the establishment of a priesthood and of sacramental symbolism, is the failure in the existence of the priest or of the sacrament; nor is it in the fact that there is a systematic development of faith.

There is no development without system either of Nature or of Humanity. We can mentally conceive of a life ethereally unmanifest, without embodiments of any sort; and possibly there is, at the conclusion of great cycles of existence, a general disembodiment, a shuffling off of all mortal coils, a fusion in unseen flame of spirits pure and breathless. But this is not the life we know, which is

revealed through veilings; whose currents are manifest only as they are resisted or interrupted; which has colorations and discolorations, tempers and distempers — the variations of its flame; which has limitations and narrownesses, even divinity being diversified, and the infinite seen only in littles; which has mortal frailty, divinely purposed and having no more connection with sin than has the frailty of the wholesome weariness that induceth sleep; and this life inhabits the crusts of worlds hardened in the cooling, whose fountains rise out of the fissures of rocks, and whose treasures are hidden in fastnesses. It is known to us as a life which has hardnesses and shocks and frictions; which has skeleton and framework as well as blood and nerve; which has actions and reactions, mechanical as well as chemical; which has measures and compensations and co-ordinations and times and seasons, and whose gravities reveal its subtle attractions. This is the life which God has Himself ordained, a life organic and structural, which has system, nay, a series of systems not only consistent in space but successive in time. That which we call the frailty of a system, whereby it dies, is, when seen with reference to that which follows, no frailty, but a transit from strength unto strength. When we shall see the fine gold which has been tried in furnace after furnace, then that which we are wont to call the golden age will seem but a rude splendor. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. What we call lapses — so they be indeed mortal lapses — are, on their divine side, ascents. As to Eden, the divine solicitude was chiefly lest our first parents should eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life and be denied euthanasy. In the prophetic vision what glorious lapses: from the frail innocence of Eden to the frailer simplicities of the patriarchal times, and from these, through the still frailer shapes of beauty and strength evoked by the aspira-

tions of the Heroic Age, to the complex structures of civilisation,— frailest of all,— and thence to the kingdom of heaven in its earthly realisation — in which Frailty and Death are for the first time glorified, being known for what they truly are in the economy of God.

The more of divine life there is in a system, as a life whose mastery is accepted and which shapes all human operations in its development, the more readily that system passes, giving place to new. It has the quickness of death as of life. The real degeneration is the withdrawal from the divine living ways — which are also the ways of upward flowing change through the quick death — and the tenacious conservation of a system thus withdrawn, which has neither the quickness of life nor of death, and is, therefore, spiritually dead. In the divine plan the material structure is secondary; the hardnesses are hidden — even as the crust of the earth has not only beneath it pent-up fires but above it the flaming luxuriance of the sun-begotten life. In the degenerate humanly shaped scheme, cut off from the divine life,— even though it be called sacred thereunto, being really set apart therefrom,— it is the structure which is primary; the mechanical processes obscure, even though they may not entirely hide, the heavenly alchemy; the veil is never lifted, and it can be rent in twain only by a divine violence, in that same hour that the all-suffering Eternal Word, forever illustrating the divinity of death, proclaims concerning this spiritually dead system that "it is finished."

The degeneration of the religious system embodied in the Sacred Mysteries of Egypt and of Greece is shown in its withdrawal from the living ways of faith, in the mediative offices of the priestly order, and in the prominence given to sacramental symbols which had taken the place of the living symbols of the Word.

The mystical drama of the Mysteries, while retaining the old nature-symbols, is itself far withdrawn from Nature as a direct expression of the divine life. Religion is divorced not only from the spiritual intimacies of Nature but also from life; it is closely confined to a sacred enclosure, and its symbols are held sacred in the sense of being "set apart." We pass from Moses by the burning bush to the sons of Levi guarding a tabernacle.

XXXII

The general Tendency of all Civilisation.

This religious tendency cannot be considered wholly by itself, since it only follows the tendency of all civilisation, in all ages, to build upon human rather than upon divine foundations.

It is not a conscious departure deliberately taken. It is an essential feature of the degeneration that every such departure is taken as if in obedience to a divine dictate. All deliberate crime, however heinous, is but the incidental exaggeration of a system which has gone wrong — gradually, by steps taken consciously, indeed, as involving choice, but unconsciously as to their full meaning and consequences. It is not necessary to the conception of sin that it be conscious of itself as sinful — it is the Self-Will in it, the exclusion of the divine life, that gives it its character. In many ways this Self-Will may enter into an individual human life, excluding the divine — as, for example, in a career of incessant activity, impelled by a sense of duty, but nevertheless a sinful career, not only as a dissipation of energy but in that it has rejected "the better part"; and, while a lifetime is in many respects an education as to its mistakes, yet it may pass without the disclosure in consciousness of so grave an error. To exclude the divine life is also to exclude the divine

wisdom, which is the only sure guide—so that error involves a loss of the vision that would disclose it. There *is* conscious, deliberate wandering; but even the outright defiances of God count for little, as to their general consequences, in comparison with those departures from Him which are called seekings, or those grave errors which inaugurate and maintain systematic perversions of truth in the guise of its service.

There is an especial blindness in the perversion which has its spring in a strong impulse—an impulse divine at its source, but wrested from the living way by the mastery of Self-Will. The after yielding and drifting—like the sins of mature age, when both impulse and temptation are weak, but habit is persistent—are more conscious; but with the sense of error is mingled that of helplessness as against the momentum of a system already grown inveterate. But in the beginning, the delusion is the madness of a wayward torrent, confusing the spiritual sensibility by the very urgency of its force, which, whithersoever it drives, seems to be divine. It is the delusion of all enthusiasm—inherent in the word itself. We say, and we say truly, that in all energy there is the divinity, but we lose sight of the fact that the human will, instead of submitting to the divine, is attempting to take it in hand by a sort of mastery, limiting, denying, betraying and crucifying it.

However we may account for it (and here all speculation is vain) this delusion is universal, pertaining it may be to all worlds, certainly entering into every stage of human development, and especially apparent when that development takes the form of institutional life.

It is quite impossible for us in this age to fully comprehend the exaltation of the first founders of institutions in ancient times—of a Moses, an Aaron, an Eumolpus, of a Solon or a Lycurgus. All these claimed and were credited

with divine inspiration. In all countries a divine prestige was given to the priesthood as well as to the rituals, which, in moments of prophetic enthusiasm, it inspired. In the very initiation of a vast error is the throbbing impulse of the divine heart; and this impulse will remain in every step of man's departure from the simplicity and purity of faith; so that alongside of the perversion we shall note the deep insistence with which the Eternal Word, immanent in even the darkened human heart, gives a divine shaping to the conceptions of the multitude and the promptings of its leaders.

Just as we would make a grave mistake in overlooking the fact of degeneration and the limitations of divine life and truth, we would make a graver mistake in supposing that God has ever abandoned His wayward children because of their wanderings and delusions. There is a departure from the full divine fellowship, and the institution of caste shows that with this departure has come the loss of equal brotherly love. Yet has the Word free course. There is an unnatural solemnity in the feasts and processions and initiations, a loving of darkness rather than light in the oath-bound secrecy; and there is established in men's hearts a kingdom of fear, extending beyond the grave and throwing its shadow back upon all earthly life—yet in and through all this is present the free Spirit of the All-loving Father, and the leadership unto hope and salvation of the Eternal Son.

Nor alone unto the celebrants of these Mysteries is there this hope. It may well be that among the uninitiated there are many who, like Socrates, are nearer than these to the living ways, even though they may be iconoclasts and reject the priestly mediation—nearer, not because of their superior intelligence, but through their readier reception of the divine life and their submission unto its mastery.

XXXIII

THE Eleusinian Mysteries may be regarded as adequately representing the dramatic expression of all ancient popular faith.

There are the Minor Mysteries, celebrated every year at Agræ, where is the first initiation — the *muesis*, or closing of the eyes — typifying a withdrawal from the visible world, as a preparation for the revelation which is to be vouchsafed at the Major Mysteries, celebrated in the Autumn of every year, at Eleusis. Those who have received the first initiation are called *Mystæ*, and those who have received the second become *Epoptæ*, or seers.

The Eleusinian Mysteries.

Nine days are devoted to the celebration of the Major Mysteries, the first five of which are spent at Athens in the gathering together of the *Mystæ* and their preparation through purification, fasting and sacrifice. On the fourth day at Athens there is the Procession of the Basket, in which a basket containing poppies and pomegranates is carried on a wagon drawn by oxen, and followed by women, bearing in their hands small mystical cases holding the sacred symbols of Demeter. On the evening of the fifth day, the *Mystæ* join in a torch-light procession to the temple of Demeter at Eleusis. The sixth day — the most solemn day of the festival — is devoted to the grand procession in which the statue of Iacchus, the son of Demeter, crowned with myrtle, is borne from Athens through the Sacred Gate, along the Sacred Way, (sacred from Eleusinian association,) and finally through the "Mystical Entrance" into Eleusis. During the following night the *Mystæ* receive the final initiation. Crowned with myrtle they enter the sacred enclosure of the temple, having first

washed their hands with holy water. Then they are led into the presence of the Hierophant, who reads to them from stone tablets, disclosing the secret mysteries. Then their eyes are opened; and it is said that Demeter sealed with her own peculiar signals—by vivid coruscations of light—the revelation already made by the Hierophant; after which a wonderfully serene light filled the temple, and the pure fields of Elysium were unveiled to the *Epoptæ*, whose ears were greeted by the songs of celestial choirs. On the seventh day the great procession returned to Athens; the eighth was devoted to Æsculapius—the divine physician; and on the ninth was performed the concluding ceremony of libation from two jars, one emptied toward the East and the other toward the West.

XXXIV

Who is this Demeter that presides over these Mysteries, and of whose grief it is that they are commemorative?

The legend is that her daughter Persephone, gathering flowers in Enna, in Sicily, was seized by Pluto and carried to the underworld; that the sorrowing mother wandered over all the earth, in a vain search for the lost one; and that, after a season, Persephone was restored to her, bearing the fatal pomegranate, the sign that, after another season, she must return to Hades.

Significance of this Mystical Drama.

The poppy-seeds and pomegranates borne in the Procession of the Basket are indicative of the Great Mother's sorrow and of its everlasting iteration. The torch-light procession is intended to represent her despairing search. The Procession of Iacchus shows forth her triumph.

Demeter has her prototype in Isis, who also had her

endlessly repeated sorrow in the loss of Osiris, and in connection with whose worship the Egyptians celebrated an annual festival.

The worship of this Great Mother, under various names, is not less remarkable for its antiquity than for its extent. To the Hindu, she was the Lady Isani. She was the Cybele of Phrygia, the Ceres of Rome, the Disa of the North. According to Tacitus she was worshipped by the ancient Suevi. She had her rites among the old Muscovites, and representations of her are found upon the sacred drums of the Lapps. She swayed the ancient world from India to Scandinavia, and everywhere she was the *Mater Dolorosa*. The prominence of this element of sorrow is shown by the fact that the sacred name of Demeter, that by which she was known in the Mysteries, was Achtheia (Grief).

The inscription upon the tablet of the veiled Isis — "I am all that hath been, all that is, all that is to be, and the veil which hideth my face no mortal hand hath ever raised" — would seem to include in her mystery — in this endless alternation of sorrow and triumph — not only Nature but humanity and divinity as well.

She saith: "I am the First and Last — the Mother and Grave of all. All generations are mine. But my fairest children, whom I have brought forth and nourished in the light, have been stolen by the Powers of Darkness. In Cyprus, as Aphrodite, I wept for Adonis, slain in the chase. Thus in Egypt I mourned for Osiris, for Attys in Phrygia, and for Persephone at Eleusis — all of whom passed to Hades, were restored for a season, and then retaken. Thus is my sorrow repeated without end. All things are taken from me. Night treadeth upon the heels of Day; the desolation of Winter wasteth the fair fruit of Summer; and Death walketh ever in the ways of Life.

But at the last, through him, my first-begotten and my best beloved, who also dieth, descendeth into Hades and riseth again, I shall triumph in Eternal Joy!"

XXXV

Spiritual Meanings of the Eleusinia.

FROM the Nature-symbols we pass, then, to the spiritual significance of the Mysteries. This Sorrowing Mother takes our grief, represents our loss, our error, our final deliverance.

The sixth day of the Eleusinia, when the ivy-crowned Iacchus—the Attic Dionysus—was borne in triumph from Athens to Eleusis, amid the joyous acclamations of a multitude numbering over thirty thousand, was the Palm Sunday of Greece. Close upon the chariot wheels of the saviour god followed, in the faith of the people, Æsculapius and Hercules—the former the divine physician, who, as a child of the Sun, was the restorer of life; the latter he who by his saving strength cleansed the earth of its Augean impurities, who, arrayed in celestial armor, subdued the monsters of the world, and who, descending into Hades, slew the three-headed Cerberus and took away from men much of the fear of death.

Such was the train of the Eleusinian Dionysus. If Demeter was the wanderer and Lady of Sorrow, he was the conqueror and the centre of all triumph. In later times he was identified with the Dionysus of Bœotian Thebes, and invested with his attributes. Thus the faith of the Hellenic Greeks made him the peaceful conqueror of the world; and the same idea of world-conqueror was associated with the Egyptian Osiris.

This association of human faith with the idea of victory is a significant feature of the Mysteries. We find it in all Dionysian symbolism; in the representations on sacred

vases; and the tombs of the ancients from Egypt to Etruria abound in monumental tokens and inscriptions indicating the prominence of triumphant hope.

The exaltation and enthusiasm of victory in the worship of Dionysus tended naturally to connect him with whatsoever is joyous in life. Hence the legend which makes him the giver of wine to men. In his triumphant progress, he is surrounded with the clustering vine and ivy; his path is through the richest fields of Southern Asia — through incense-breathing Arabia, across the Euphrates and Tigris and through the flowery vales of Cashmere, to India, the garden of the world; and, as from sea to sea he establishes his reign by bloodless conquests, he is attended by Fauns and Satyrs and all Pan's following; wine and honey are his gifts, and all the earth is glad in his gracious presence. Hence he was ever associated with Oriental luxuriance, and in his worship, even among the Greeks, there was a large infusion of Oriental extravagance.

The Greeks attached a profound spiritual meaning to the Eleusinia and to their worship of Dionysus. Demeter gave them bread; but they never forgot that she gave them also the bread of life. "She gave us," saith Isocrates, "two gifts that are the most excellent — fruits that we might not live like beasts, and that initiation, those who have part in which have sweeter hope, both as regards the close of life and for all eternity." So Dionysus, they believed, gave them wine, not only to lighten the cares of life, but as the symbol of his higher spiritual office as Liberator. Thus, from the earliest times and in all the world have bread and wine been sacramental symbols.

XXXVI

The growth, the outward dramatic development, of any ritual may well be called a Mystery. It would seem that into the associated activities of men united by a common faith there enters some sort of compelling instinct, something which is from above and which draws these activities by an unseen law into constructions and interpretations of the highest, the ultimate truths of the spiritual world.

The Law of Repetition in Religious Development.

Men unite in some simple, significant act, significant from its relation to the heart. This act is sure to be repeated.

> "Quod semel dictum est stabilisque rerum
> Terminus servet."

The subtle law of repetition is as sure in determination as it is in consciousness. Habit is as inevitable as Memory; and, as nothing can be forgotten, but, being once known, is known forever — so nothing is once done from the heart but it will be done again. Lethe and Annihilation are the only utterly empty myths. The poppy has only a fabulous virtue, but that of the pomegranate is compelling. While death and oblivion only *seem* to be, remembrances and resurrections there *must* be, and without end. Therefore it is that the significant act will be repeated; and the repetition will come to have periodicity, established intervals; and about it will be gathered all the associations of interest in human life. At every successive repetition, at every fresh resurrection, is evolved through human faith and sympathy a deeper significance, until the development comprehends the deepest thought and feeling of a people; nay more, there enters into it a divine power and meaning so that it is regarded as a revelation from heaven.

XXXVII

Now, that which works in men — and especially in men associated together — with this leading, is the Word, the Eternal Son. As he is first seen in the Nature-symbols, so he leads on from these, not only until they disappear, and in their place humanity stands face to face with a saviour, but until in the shape of this saviour his own incarnation is anticipated or prefigured.

The Foreshadowing of the Christ.

For this Dionysus of the Mysteries is the son of Zeus by a mortal mother. He was born of Semele of the royal house of Thebes. A little before his birth Zeus visited the mother in all the majesty of his presence, with thunderings and lightnings, so that she, unable to stand before the revealed god, was consumed by fire. Out of her ashes was perfected the birth of the child — whence he was called the Child of Fire.

The Egyptian followers of Osiris sought to lose their identity in him, assuming his name at death, and in all respects desiring to take his very semblance, to be "Such as Osiris," that they might be known as his in the Resurrection: even as the Psalmist saith, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Thus all human faith has a single centre — in Christ. Its shaping from the beginning was in "conformity to the image of the Son."

XXXVIII

Dionysus and Demeter, like Osiris and Isis, were Lord and Lady of the Underworld. The last libation of the Eleusinia was twofold, first to the East, and then to the West — the way of the dead. In no ancient system

of faith was the dark and silent abode of the dead entirely removed from the earth. To the Hebrew, as to the Babylonian, it was a place of exceeding depth, below the waters. To the Egyptian it was Amenti — the land of the West. To the Greek, it lay beyond the Pillars of Hercules. In both the Hebrew and Gentile conception, this place was the receptacle of all souls, good or bad; but there was a wide difference between the more spiritual conceptions of this netherworld — as represented, for example, in the Hebrew prophetic writings — and those popularly entertained, which were a confused medley of conjectures born of shadowy hopes and fears.

Pagan Conceptions of the Underworld.

The first offerings to the dead of food and wine, as among the early Aryans, were undoubtedly prompted by the belief in the intimate association and co-operation of the human with the divine. As it was believed that through such offerings Indra himself was strengthened for his conflict with the powers of darkness, so it was natural to consider those who had passed from sight as more directly the participants in this conflict, and to make offerings to them as to the gods. There was no fear of the gods, but of those who were the enemies of both gods and men.

But fear of some sort there has always been among men in connection with death, and this fear has extended its kingdom beyond the grave, its hold upon the human heart increasing with the degeneration of the spiritual nature. Death is associated with weakness; the last steps taken before the passage to the unseen world point downward, and the descent readily becomes a panic. It may be but the passage, as in the old Norse phrase, to another light; still there is the dread of some dark interim between sunset and sunrise, death being a sort of Lesser Mysteries to which the Greater are yet to come.

XXXIX

In all ages there has been the tendency to divide the universe into two kingdoms, with conflicting dynasties, one of which is engaged in the temptation and destruction of man, as the other is pledged to his deliverance. And the conflict between these is usually begun in the fields of heaven. Ate, the ancient daughter of Zeus,—she of the shining locks, who beguiles all; in whose nimble footsteps limp half-blind and lame the Prayers of Men; who never touches the earth, but, with the uncertain steppings of her tender feet, glides above the heads of men; to whom is attributed all that goes amiss,— practised her first deceit upon Olympus, whence she was hurled to Hades by her divine sire. Circe and the Sirens are, in the Homeric poems, but the associates of this Ate; and they are all in alliance with the Tartarean dynasty.

The Two Dynasties.

In the earliest conceptions of men respecting these two dynasties, they seem to hold alternate sway, like Day and Night, Life and Death. It is a movement like that of the flowing and ebbing tide, like the weaving by day of Penelope's web, which in the night is all unraveled. It is a singular conception — that of Neptune as lying always next to Pluto, and ever leaning toward him; for this Pluto is both Giver and Taker, the god of Wealth and of Loss — and the sea is especially the way of his passage, whether he gives or takes, since it is the way both of life and of death. In this view, while the conflict between the Powers of Light and of Darkness, between Fire and Mist, is not ignored, it would seem that man acknowledged the supremacy of both dynasties, and regarded them as equal necessities. His fear was but the under-side of hope —

the one being as natural and necessary as the other. We find here a normal apprehension — the sensitive tremor of quick life in the dark, which readily passes at cock-crowing — the fear of children, which has in it nothing morbid. Eilytheia, the goddess of child-birth, is as nearly associated with Hades as is Hermes, the *Psychopompos* or Leader of the Dead. To the lotus-bud of life the moisture of the boundless sea upon which it floats is as necessary as are the heat and light of the sun in the boundless sky above it. It was not merely an euphemism that the Furies were first named Eumenides, or friendly-minded.

In the first period of Nature-worship — that represented in the Vedic hymns — there is no indication of any overmastering fear. In the following period, polytheism and the priesthood come to have a fixed status, and there is between the two dynasties a distinct line drawn, a sharper conflict dividing them.

XL

The Aryan race in its movements is, on the one hand, driven by fiercer nomads, and, on the other, is brought into contact with the lower and more barbarous types of races, native to the regions against which it is thrown. The more superstitious beliefs of the indigenous peoples insensibly but to a considerable degree, in the progress of time, affect the religious faith of their invaders, giving it a harsher aspect at the same time that they are modified by it, being softened and lightened. But the terrible pressure is continued from the North by the restless hordes of Tartars, Scythians or Cimmerians. What more natural than that these dreaded and mysterious assailants should be clothed with unearthly attributes? In a period when so much of the earth is unknown, all the

The Border-land of the Unseen.

forces lying beyond familiar boundaries, especially if they are constantly threatening forces, come to be regarded with a dread which, in proportion to the uncertainty of anticipated attack and the magnitude of its horrors when made, approaches the supernatural. The regions from which such onsets are made, so remote from all ordinary associations, become in a fear-impelled imagination the confines of Hades itself.

The Indian islanders of the Pacific looked upon the Caribs as a host of incarnate fiends. In the same light the Hindus regarded the Nagas, who, from the mountains of higher India between Assam and Manipur, made incursions upon the peaceful tribes below — prototypes, probably, of the mythologic Nagas kept in durance by Sekra at the root of Mount Meru, in the Indian Tartarus. The Great Wall of China was at first a defence against those who were, in a double sense, Tartars; as all the fortresses and iron walls erected in the passes of the Caucasus against the shadowy hosts of the North were, in the thoughts of their builders, a protection against the legions of outer darkness. This Caucasian region — as its connection with the Tauric Diana and the transfixion of the Titan Prometheus would seem to indicate — was from earliest times a centre of superstitious dread, which even as late as the Moslem conquest still lingered among the mountains.

This ring-fence around the ancient world, separating the familiar tribes of men from those confounded with the nether dynasty, may be traced from Asia into Europe. The Cimmerians, who, before their retreat to the German Ocean, dwelt by the Bosporus, attacked the Ionians with such ferocity that we are not surprised by the Homeric legend which gave them a place near the entrance to Hades. In the Northwest we reach Finland, the mythological Jötunheim of the Norse folk — the land of the

Giants, variously named by the Northern skalds, "Mountain-Wolves," "the folk of the caves," "the enemies of the Asæ." Here, on the Finland border, are certain mountains, one side of which was the familiar world of men, while the other, with deep chasms opening to Helheim, was the haunt of elves and demons, against whose baleful influence, in the Middle Ages, chapels were built, and in them were placed the images of patron saints.

Thus, from India to the Northern Ocean in Europe, are traced the lines of this border conflict. But along the Western boundaries of the world its signs are multiplied, and the intensity of their dread meaning reaches its culmination. For here we are upon the very confines of Tartarus, and we have also reached the great mysterious sea, the travellers upon which, even in Plato's thought, were hardly to be considered as surely belonging to this world. Here, by the Pillars of Hercules, stood the gigantic Atlas, the Titan brother of Prometheus, guarding the way of life and of death. Near at hand are the Cyclopean forges; and all along this alien coast are the cavern-homes of monsters, Chimæras, Gorgons, and the Graiæ, who, with Circe and the light-stepping Ate, represent upon the earth the underlying Hades.

From such human conflict with alien powers, it was but a step to the conception of a wider conflict, transferred from the hands of men to the championship of the celestials — the conflict of Ormuzd and his hosts against the hordes of Ahriman, of the Devas against the Asouras, of the Asæ against the Giants, of the Olympians against the Titans — and, forever, against the Children of Mist the Children of Fire.

XLI

No system of faith could fail to recognise the shadowy kingdom of fear, or to furnish some special means of deliverance. The Eleusinian Mysteries, especially after their modification by Orphic influences, and the fuller association therewith of the Northern Dionysus, (who had absorbed all the brightness of Apollo,) illuminated the dark way of death and the world beyond.

The Eleusinian Deliverance from this Kingdom of Fear.

But, mingled with the hopeful symbolism of these Mysteries, we find in the general belief a confused mass of legends relating to Hades, and it is difficult to distinguish between those which were germane to the Eleusinia and those which were the offspring of popular fancy.

The validity of the Eleusinian initiation was acknowledged in Hades, and this ceremony was generally deemed essential as a preparation for death. The relation of the Eleusinia to death and the underworld is shown in ancient paintings. There was a painting by Polygnotus in the Lesche at Delphi, of which Pausanias has left us a minute description, representing the Homeric Hades. Charon has just reached the Tartarean shore of the Styx with his ghostly freight — a young man and maiden. The latter is Clesboia, a priestess of Demeter, holding in her hand the sacred basket of the goddess. The uninitiated are represented in another portion of this picture as undergoing the kind of punishments which the poets have feigned, whenever they have attempted to give an occupation to the Shades — such as the filling of leaking cisterns from broken pitchers. This activity, vain as it is, is a poetic fiction rather than a belief. The atmosphere of Hades is in all ancient traditions, and especially in those of the Semitic

races, one of Lethean suspense, the nearest possible to that of sleep. It is a dusty, shadowy realm, bloodless and unsubstantial. The movements of Pluto's pale and spectral subjects are feeble and wandering, like those of somnambulists. It is an abode of neither positive torment nor bliss — a state of waiting.

The legend of Persephone is the special link between the Eleusinia and the underworld. The story of her seizure was, in some form, an important element in the primitive traditions of all ancient faith. It was that part of them which especially touched death and the belief in a resurrection. In the Egyptian tradition it is Osiris who is lost and Isis who restores him. The legends of Adonis, of Attys and of the Scandinavian Baldur have a similar significance, as had also the Babylonian story of the visit of Ishtar to "the house of obscurity, the seat of Irkalla." The song of Linus, wherever sung,— in Egypt, Phœnicia, Cyprus or Greece,— while to outward seeming, in connection with autumnal festivals, it was the dirge of the dying Summer, was also the requiem of all sepulture, and, in the religious system of which it was a part, it was a prophecy of hope.

XLII

The Conduct of the Dead.

The conduct of the departed soul to Hades was, in the popular conception, invested with the most circumstantial dramatic interest. To meet the supposed difficulties of the journey there was, through sacred rites and observances, an elaborate system of contrivances, some of them rude and mechanical, and others, of a later period, more refined and spiritual.

In the first place, there was the perplexing solicitude as to the dissolution of soul and body. The Egyptians,

believing in the permanent identity of the two, embalmed their dead. The Greeks, on the other hand, took the speediest means of precipitating dissolution by cremation, praying meanwhile to the winds to hurry forward the process of liberation. Sepulture of some sort was considered absolutely necessary, ere the soul could wholly leave its familiar haunts.

The obstacles in the way of the subterranean journey, once entered upon, were, in their earliest shape, of a material character: wild beasts, thick darkness, impenetrable thickets — against which there was the equally rude provision of hatchets, flint and tinder-boxes, and defensive weapons, buried with the dead.

In an age of greater refinement, the desolation of an awful solitude confronted the soul, against which hatchets and tinder-box and defensive weapons were of no avail. Having its rise in the heightened apprehension of a subtle imagination, it could only be dissipated by an equally subtle construction of hope. In the transition from a cycle known and measured to one unfamiliar and wholly undefined, boundless range was given to the operations of hostile powers. The guidance and guardianship of Hermes relieved the soul in this terrible solicitude. This important office of Hermes gave him a peculiar place in human regard. Sacrifice was offered to him before death, and libation before sleep, the image of death. The Hellenic imagination, repelled by the weird solemnity which was his primitive characteristic, reconstructed him to suit its more joyous mood. Stories were invented of the ludicrous adventures of his infancy — sportive traits that convulsed Olympus with laughter. An intellectual subtlety was attributed to him, a craft used for the benefit of mankind. That he might seem less a stranger to the dead, he was more than any other divinity associated with the

common concerns of life. He was the god of commerce, the master of accords and social amenities. His statue was in the vestibule of every home, and the most familiar object in every public place; he was the god of the highways, the cross-ways and the by-ways, in life as beyond it. Thus he was welcomed as a comforter, and with his golden wand he calmed the troubled thoughts that lie next to death, even as he quelled the tremors of his ghostly followers netherward.

Charon, the Stygian ferryman, while a sacred figure, was in most respects a creature of the popular fancy. The payment of two oboli for the passage across the dark river (a tariff religiously placed under the tongue of every Greek at death) and the supposed preference of this stern personage for well-dressed people, as well as his obstinate refusal to take any passenger whose friends had not esteemed him worthy of decent sepulture, seem to indicate a regard for wealth and respectability—like that which prompted the Norse proverb, "It is not well to go barefooted to Odin"—not in accord with any deep spiritual feeling.

XLIII

But the special occasion of human dread in connection with Hades was its general air of desolation and weakness. We have a glimpse of this in the eagerness with which the ghostly throng press to the outer gate when Ulysses fills the sacrificial trench with blood—just for one taste of the old vital current!

Faith in the Lord and Lady of the West.

To dissipate this gloom was the mission of the Eleusinian saviours. Not only is the hope of deliverance through them the master-key to the symbolism of tombs; these saviours were the hope of the soul beyond Hades itself. Above all other defences against the Powers of Darkness

—above the buried weapons, the hatchets and flints and other sepulchral accessories, above the elaborate funeral rites and the comfortable guidance of Hermes—was the faith in the Lord and Lady of the West, to whom they committed themselves in their last sleep, nay, rather it should be said, in whom they fell asleep. "Asleep in Dionysus," "Asleep in Osiris," are familiar inscriptions on sepulchral tablets. Nothing less than this can express the identification, as it seemed to the initiated, of themselves with their divine deliverer—so complete that in Attica the dead were named Demetreioi, after the Great Mother, just as the Egyptian at his decease took the name of his saviour Osiris, the Northman that of Odin, and the Aztec at death was clothed in the habiliments of his sun-god. At the numerous burial-places attributed to Osiris—Busiris, Taposiris, Memphis, and Philæ—the Egyptians were anxious to secure for themselves likewise their last resting-place, that they might lie near the grave of their Lord.

XLIV

Fluctuations of Hope and Fear.

But the bright face of Dionysus sometimes seems to suffer eclipse in this nether darkness which he has visited for the deliverance of souls. Demeter herself is sometimes imagined as an Erynnis. There is in the human heart a constant flux and reflux from hope to fear, and from fear to hope. Thus in mediæval art, the Father is sometimes represented as angry, and the Son as standing between Him and condemned humanity; and again the Son is shown as angry, and the Virgin becomes the mediator.

Nevertheless, in the end, the wave of hope is the stronger, bearing the human soul beyond the land of silence and of darkness to the Elysian Isles.

XLV

The Roman Death.

The history of Rome furnishes no new chapter in the development of ancient faith. Roman religion reflected Roman civilisation, which was not creative, but formative. Roman life, even in its heroic period, was cold and hard and tense; it was the history of an army, and its military discipline was transferred to its civil functions; what it ambitiously mastered it admirably administered. Its virtues, in this period, were those of the trained athlete; "Justitia fiat, ruat cœlum" was its expressive motto, and such stress was laid upon Justice that all heavenly graces were indeed sacrificed upon its altar.

This branch of the Aryan race, with its threefold strain — Latin, Sabine and Etruscan — considered as a Roman development, has no patriarchal prelude, so rapidly are the shepherd-founders transformed, through wolfish nurture, into a nation of spearmen (Quirites). From the first, Rome is a Campus Martius; and its martial career has no heroic background; the structure of Virgil's epic is wholly unreal, an echo, not a response, to the Homeric story; there is no Roman Achilles or Roman Helen — neither the rapture of love to awaken a rhapsody, nor the ideal glories of war. The poets of the Augustan age rehearsed the Hellenic legends and tales, as if they had become their own by adoption, just as the Romans of that age worshipped thirty-thousand gods, which, through conquest, had been included in their Pantheon.

This Roman people has no prototype. It is a nation which, through the strenuous exertions of its infancy against irritant forces, has been denied the brooding calm of child-

hood. Accordingly, in its imperial maturity, (and the empire is necessary to its maturity,) it is the grandest exhibition ever witnessed upon earth of a merely worldly power — the grandest for its intensity as well as for its extent — without one note of enthusiasm to relieve the brutality, relentlessness and atrocity of its triumphs,— without a single spiritual impulse to lighten and soften the fabric of its might, or which would recall the large purposes and ideal expectations nourished in a sublime youth. Accordingly, also, in its decline, there is no golden glory of twilight in its evening sky, even as it has had no dewy, fragrant and aspiring dawn. It is as brutal in its relaxation as in its tension — a relaxation which has begun in the imperial city, while yet its victorious legions guard the extremities of its domain from India to Britain — a failure at the heart of the gladiator while yet his strong arms grasp the world. As no heaven, with ample inspiration of hope, lay about Rome in her infancy, so over her closing eyelids there is none that bends down with still ampler promise and invitation.

It is the tremendous, incessant and complex activity of Rome which chiefly impresses us, the reaction from which is not a development of the passive side of human nature — of æsthetic sensibility, of philosophic contemplation or of spiritual intuition — but an abandonment to indolent ease and luxurious pleasures. We confront a system of competitions, strifes, encroachments, injuries, which are either balanced against each other in an equilibrium which is called justice, or are extinguished by imperial absorption. Cæsar, having by usurpation reached the throne, must extinguish the possibility of all other usurpation. The empire itself has no security until it has suppressed all other empire; the bond of allegiance, kept to-day and to-morrow broken, is not sufficient — there must

be no alternative to submission. It is a vast system of social activity, but it is the military society, the army, which is predominant. There is nothing absolutely sacred but the military sacrament. And Cæsar, the head of the army, is the fountain of all law.

Poets, orators, and historians combine in adulations of the Cæsars, looking beyond their triumphs to a millennium of peace and prosperity. They look upon the marble splendors of their city, upon the magnificent highways throughout the empire, upon the aqueducts and other material improvements, upon the spoils of conquest and the captives that become the slaves of the conquerors; and they point to all these as evidences of national wealth and grandeur. They see not the hollowness of the whole scheme; that the expense of the army, of all these improvements and of the public displays, is the exhaustion of agriculture and commerce; that peace itself is, in these circumstances, but another name for desolation; that, in such a system, there can be no security, when of all Romans the least secure from violence is the sacredly inviolable Cæsar; and that, wholly apart from any abuses incident to the system, the very strength of any merely material structure must be accounted as weakness; so that even if there were no enemy to assail it, no barbarians lying in wait for its destruction, it would fall to pieces of its own weight and brittleness.

In the Roman religion inhered the weakness which was inherent in Roman civilisation. Cæsar himself was Pontifex Maximus — nay, he was the only divinity practically recognised in this worldly scheme.

The study of Roman history is instructive only as it is a study of death — not simply of the death of Rome, but of Rome as itself the death of the ancient world. It was because of the lack of any spiritual impulse or movement that

this death has endured through nearly a score of centuries. For Constantine and the worldly Christianity which followed his standards only prolonged the mortality, which was still further perpetuated in Papal Rome, and which remains to-day in all the forms of Church or State which still retain the similitude of the old worldly scheme. What an inversion of terms was there in the reign of Decius, when death occupied the places of life above ground, while life was hidden in the places of death, with the Christians in the catacombs! The living spirit of Christianity might well have looked forward to the coming of the Northern barbarians; but when the latter came, while they shattered so much of the material structure, they failed to precipitate the mortal issue, but rather fed with their fresh life the decrepid ecclesiastical formalism of the Middle Ages.

The connection of the Roman Empire with Christianity will ever remain its most interesting feature, as important prospectively as was the connection of Judea with it retrospectively. In the case of Judea the vital prophetic current was sustained for ages against antagonistic tendencies, leading up to the Christ who, at his coming, was rejected by the Jews. In the case of Rome, it would almost seem that the strenuous but always moribund empire — its energies following always the ways of spiritual death — had no intelligible meaning save as related to the new life which was to come. The universal peace of the Augustan age encircled and brooded over the babe in Bethlehem — a peace which, with all that it involved, and especially the easier communication between all parts of the civilised world, would seem to have been conquered, at the expense of all Pagan life, with reference to the advent of this holy child and the spread of his gospel. He was crucified by Roman soldiers. And, though during his life-time and for a long time afterward his name never in so much as a whisper found its

way to the ear of a Cæsar, yet at the end of three centuries, during which his followers spread over the most important portions of the empire, their zeal being kept alive by frequent persecution, he was lifted up to a fresh crucifixion upon Constantine's banner and his religion was degraded by its official recognition. Thereafter, under the incubus of Imperial and Papal alliances, in the busy tomb of this Roman death was the living germ of Christianity buried for centuries, awaiting its partial emancipation through the Protestant impulse and its complete emancipation yet to come.

XLVI

A Retrospect.

THE history of man's spiritual development, before the coming of our Lord, is that of his correspondence with the Eternal Word — the manifestation of the Father in Nature and in the human heart. And in this cycle of ancient faith man's response to the divine leading of the Word in Nature was the measure of his divinely quickened life, and his departure therefrom through waywardness and self-will was the measure of his spiritual death.

We have traced the ever-widening steps of this departure, from the naïve sensibility of the earliest Aryan faith to the immediately divine suggestions of Nature; through the complexities of institutional life — not errant because it was structural, but because it was a worldly scheme, excluding more and more completely, at every stage, the divine life — including the development of a priestly order, a system of polytheism and a dramatic ritual associated with fixed symbols; until, in the completion of this worldly scheme, through the perfection of that civilisation which under the Cæsars possessed and policed the habitable

globe, we reach the ultimate illustration of spiritual death — a death which not only is the paralysis of Paganism, but, reaching forward with its spectral gloom, lays its icy hand upon the warm heart of nascent Christendom, muffling its divine voices, and suppressing its spiritual impulses.

We have seen also that whithersoever the wayward children of men wandered, thither closely followed the loving Spirit of God, giving them, so long as they in any way held to the living symbols of Nature, the large meanings of these symbols; with its own tenderness inspiring the personifications of their imagination — the great sorrowing Mother, known by so many names, and their saviour gods; with its radiant comfort illuminating every image of hope shaped in their trembling hearts against the images of fear; with its saving virtue so transforming their very perversions that false mediations might foreshadow the true Way, and hollow propitiations anticipate the reconcilement to come; following them with prophetic warnings and pleadings; making their masterful pride of heroism and thought its ministers for the destruction of lifeless structures; and finally, in this close pursuit, overtaking them in their last extremity — in the helplessness of death, in that vast prison-house and sepulchre, known as Roman civilisation — taking their very flesh and appearing unto them as the Son of Man.

It is he who hath been from the beginning, seen from the first in all prophetic vision. It is he who hath trodden the wine-press alone,— the Bridegroom who hath passed while all the foolish virgins slept,— the Eternal Word that, in Nature and in Man, hath been bruised in every fibre, yet lending himself to the bruising,— the Good Shepherd who hath gathered his lambs from every earthly fold.

END OF FIRST BOOK.

SECOND BOOK

THE INCARNATION

THE INCARNATION

I

O HOLY Night! At all times holy, being the oldest ordinance of God, the oldest symbol of the Eternal Word, before ever the sun was made—thrice-holy now, overshadowing the mystery of the Word become flesh! Thou that veiling the earth dost reveal the heavens; thou that ever regardest Eilytheia who presideth over child-birth; thou mother of Sleep, the nurse of all strength; thou sister of Hades, the Grave of the world, whence riseth the Lord of Light—thou hast held within thy darkness not only all shapes of fear and all ghostly portents, being thyself the likeness at once of man's ignorance and of God's mysterious permission of all that men call evil,—pain and sorrow and death,—but also all those precious things which have been hid from the foundation of the world, the treasures of the Kingdom, now for the first time to be brought into the clear light of day and made real to the human heart by the Son of Man.

The Coming of the Bridegroom.

Beneath thy veil, O holiest night of nights, all Nature, that hath so long sighed forth in every inarticulate breathing the voiceless Word, is thrilled with the expectancy of utterance. Thou walkest upon the earth, and thy feet are in the darkness, but above thy head all the heavenly lamps are lighted, and behold! the Bridegroom cometh!

It is, indeed, the night of the human world, whose darkness closeth all around this radiant spot in Bethlehem,

scarcely conscious thereof. The grandest manifestation of merely human power and at the same time of its inherent weakness standeth, in sublime antithesis, over against the Appearing of the Lord of a new and spiritual kingdom,—the strophe in which are mingled the brazen blare of martial trumpets and the languishing strains of Sybaritic music, against the heavenly antistrophe of the angels, heralding Peace and Good Will.

And yet this night of human history in many ways foreshadoweth the dawn. The semblance of unity into which all peoples are brought by imperial cohesion is a preparation for the real brotherhood of all men in Christ. This universal peace which hath fallen upon the world, though it is but an armistice maintained by numberless legions, foreshadoweth the peace which passeth understanding. And not alone are there these negative similitudes of the coming kingdom; for, while all men sleep,—as in the deep slumber of the dusty underworld,—yet a more magical strain than that from an Orpheus' lyre reacheth some inner sense, stirring a divine tumult in their dreams. In this lull, this suspense of human thought, there is a *sursum corda*, an undercurrent of expectation, a suggestion of meanings that transcend all visible pomp and circumstance—meanings which find no centre of resolution in Rome or Cæsar. Not even upon the earth can be found such a centre, until the Expected come; and there be Wise men who watch, while others sleep, until they see the Star in the East and go forth to find the King.

It is not only in Palestine, or in the East, that there is this vaguely conscious waiting. The divine impulse of expectation reacheth from the waiting heart of the virgin mother unto the western bounds of the vast imperial bosom of the world, now held in the deep sleep which encloseth the vision of heavenly Rest.

But not unto the wise ones and great of the earth, but unto humble shepherds tending their flocks by night, is the direct announcement of our Lord's Appearing first made. Unto them is the song of the angels; and every brute creature heareth this song and kneeleth in dumb sympathy with this Noel. Not unto Cæsar, not unto Herod, nor yet unto the Sanhedrim is lisped the glad tidings. Nay, all his life upon the earth, shall this Christ stand in Cæsar's shadow; the manger in which he lieth at birth is but an incident of Cæsar's tax-gathering; he shall fly from the presence of Herod, Cæsar's representative, who seeketh the young child's life; at the hands of Cæsar's spearmen shall he suffer death—and yet shall this august Cæsar never know of his existence!

The heralds come from Heaven, this vast multitude of angels, singing of Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men, as the refrain of the Noel song, and the stars are the lamps of this heavenly procession; but the Bridegroom himself is not there, nor in this brilliant company. Wherefore cometh he not out of the skies with supreme pomp and majesty? Nay, this night is heaven shorn of its glory that the earth may have it altogether!

"Ye shall see a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." This to the shepherds was to be the sign. As man was created in the image of God, so now God is born in the image of man. He that hath filled all human life in its vital currents now receiveth these currents into his own nature, so that henceforth he knoweth what is in man by a human experience. And this experience in him beginneth at the very beginning, not only in that he is a babe, but in that the stream of all humanity before him, with its inherent and inherited tendencies and aptitudes, entereth into his blood and brain and temperament, so that he is verily the Son of Man.

"In swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." He hath not even the wings of angel — so far from that is he that there is not room for him in the inn. Crowded out, from the very first, is this long-expected Guest. He cometh into the world as even the poorest of all mankind, a helpless infant, who must grow even to reach the stature of a man.

II

WHAT limitation! He who has been, and still is, the Eternal Son, the Word which has free course in all worlds, which is the divine life of the Universe and the divine life in humanity, is, as incarnate, the Son of God only as he is the Son of Man, having only such divine knowledge as have the pure in heart through the vision of God — only such powers as any man may have through full correspondence with the divine life in perfect faith. Truly from the beginning he has limited himself, since there is no manifestation save by limitation; he has taken all embodiments; he has not only determined all laws and types, but his diversification has been ultimate in all individual existence — but, as incarnate, he is limited in his limitation, in his diversity, and is singularly finite, being only the one individual man. He is limited in time, not only to a single life, but to one particular generation. He is directly seen by only a few of that generation, and his words, confined to a single tongue, are heard by those only who come within the range of his voice. The word itself, by becoming articulate, is broken; and in order to reach the whole world, it must be recorded, it may be, long after its utterance, and translated into many tongues. He requires nourishment to sustain life and sleep for its refreshment. If he walks much he is weary; even the

The Human Limitation.

touch which heals takes something of his strength. His outward knowledge comes as to other men through sensation and through the understanding. He that has seen always because he had not eyes now sees with the eye. He to whom a thousand years are but as a day, now counts the days by sunrises and sunsets. Moreover he inherits such habitudes and dispositions as other men, and there is in him the possibility of a choice that, if exercised, would waken them into sin.

Yet, Beloved, on the other hand, what gain unto us from this very limitation! Suppose that the Christ had come, as the majority of the Hebrews expected him to come, in the clouds and with glory, the Son of Man only in form, and had established a universal kingdom, the dead having been raised, so that, even as to time, there should be no partial submission to his reign, and that this kingdom should have no end. Suppose, moreover, that it was a spiritual kingdom. To the very conception of a so sudden transformation the idea of a divine compulsion is essential. If it was this overwhelming display of divine power that, in the fulness of time, was to be made —why then all these centuries of waiting? If the loving response of man's will unto the divine will, from choice and simple faith, was desired, then we can comprehend the waiting of the Bridegroom. But if this faith and willingness were accounted so little in the Messianic kingdom that the latter must be a divine seizure of the human soul, then wherefore should its coming have been delayed? There can be no spiritual kingdom established through this violence—it is the violent that taketh *it* by force. The saviour that should come thus, in the mere semblance of humanity, would unto the human heart seem less than a Dionysus or an Osiris.

"Unto *us* a Son is born." This is the true prophetic

anticipation. He must be wholly ours! Ours, not by a dramatic fiction or impersonation, but in the uttermost reality. This is the essential meaning of the Incarnation. Take away a single limitation; let this Jesus of Galilee be in but one point not tempted as we are; let him do or know save as it is possible for man to do or know; let him, like Buddha, hurl elephants into the air by marvellous strength, or, like Joshua, make the sun and moon stand still—then he is in so far other than the Son of Man, is in so far removed from us, and the human heart receives a shock in its deepest sensibility.

It is not a question as to what an Emanuel could be. Any sort of incarnation, with all degrees of power, is conceivable. It is a question as to the significance of this Emanuel in his relation to the human heart. It is an adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign. The Word is not become flesh to reveal but to veil omnipotence. There has been no lack of the manifestation of almighty power from the beginning, or of the human recognition of such power. He whose might is shown in the movement of worlds need not take the shape of a man to show that might. The divine mastery of the elements is unquestioned; and their mastery by a human hand would be a novel revelation only in its new association with human instead of with divine power—showing, not that God had become man, but how nearly man had become God.

The very efficacy of a Saviour is in his nearness. Through the Incarnation, this nearness to us is closer than that of the shepherd unto the sheep. The shepherd indeed follows his sheep whithersoever they may have strayed. He finds them on the dark mountains, and they, hearing his familiar voice, take courage and follow him unto a place of safety. But, though he take them

in his arms, and carry them over all the rough places, yet is he not thus as near to them as our Lord is unto his own.

Considering any salvation or restoration, we see what it really is by considering what has been marred or lost. If there has been a departure, then, on the part of the Saviour, there is a following until he overtakes. If there has been lost the sense of our divine fellowship, then this Saviour appears unto us and mingles with us in our ways, as our associate, friend and brother. If the very type of man, as a child of God, has been broken and perverted, then the Saviour so appears as to show us that type in its original freshness and glory. If the perversion has developed into a system of fractions and refractions, then this Saviour unfolds the true harmony of the kingdom. And as we can suppose no new or altered divine disposition, no sudden divine repentance, the appearance of the Saviour will be only the intense reinforcement of divine activities for man's redemption that have been operative from the beginning. Always there has been the following, always the invitation unto newness of life, always the full revelation of spiritual meanings. The light has been in the world, but the darkness hath apprehended it not: on the divine side, full revelation — on the human, almost entire blindness and deafness, though the tender solicitations of the Spirit have reached the heart of man and so impelled its impulses and imaginations that, even in the darkness, they have taken shadowy shapes and movements of hope.

What, then, is needed for the efficiency of a divine revelation that from the beginning has been so full and comprehensive? It must be made a human revelation. The Word must become flesh. The Eternal Son of God must become the Son of Man, must show forth and illus-

trate the original human type; and the ever repeated Parables of Nature must be translated into Parables of human speech. The divine must be completely veiled in the human, so that it may be revealed as a human life, and be humanly comprehended. It must illustrate human life in full correspondence with the divine, and must therefore show forth all that is possible to man as the result of this union. Should the illustration of the type in any way transcend the type, an element of confusion would be introduced into the very economy of salvation. As our leader, he can be and show forth only that which he calls upon us to be and show forth. If he teaches us to pray, it must be with his, the Lord's own, prayer. He saith "Our Father" just as we should say it. He takes the same attitude to the divine will that we should take. Verily, he must be so identified with us that whatever is done even unto the least of these, his brethren, is done unto him. As incarnate, he is not a personation of fire, or of lightning, or of the majesty of the sea, or even of the power of an angel, but simply and wholly man, revealing God only as he veileth Him.

III

But this veiling is no disguise. In every one of us there is the divine life, which includes every vital function of soul and body — the very life of our life — which has been perverted by our wayward self-will, (wherein is our freedom,) and so disguised. But in our Lord there was no disguise. His will was in complete harmony with the divine will. And this completeness of his humanity — the essential feature of the Incarnation — was not only the basis of a special divine revelation, but was itself the clearest divine revela-

Divinity Veiled but not Disguised.

tion which it is possible for man to receive, the only one which would be effective for his restoration. In this complete humanity only do we see the undisguised divinity.

The divinity of our Lord is impressed upon us very much in the same way as is the fact that the sun shines by his own and not by a reflected light. It is a truth manifest of itself or not at all. There can, in the very nature of the case, be no demonstration thereof, any more than there can be of any vital fact. Any number of witnesses to his miraculous works would not give us this impression, nor would his own claim to divinity. Tradition, though it be the tradition of the church, could not establish such a truth. It is not a truth which we accept, but which reveals itself. We do not take possession of it, it takes possession of us.

To one only seeing the sunlight there would be no apparent difference between it and moonlight, save in degree; but, standing in it, we *feel* another sort of difference — a difference in kind. To one really receiving the Christ-life, his divinity would be immediately apparent, even if the Gospel nowhere directly declared it. It is an intuition concurrent with faith, rather than an article of faith. Credited upon authority, it could have only the weight of that authority, and could not stand; and yet, without the support of any authority, it would forever assert itself.

It is not the divinity which gives authority to the message — this also reveals itself for what it is; but, being revealed in and through the Christ, the divinity of the Messiah and of his message are manifest unto faith in a single apprehension. No argument can help or hinder. We cannot separate the message from the Messiah, since divinely he is its spirit and humanly its embodiment. It is altogether one round life, delivered unto us in its indi-

visible integrity; and, in our reception of it, our faith is characterised by the same simplicity. The moment we try to analyse it, the life departs, leaving only our own dogmatic thought, which is worthless.

If there be any one phrase that could tersely and fully express the compass of that manifestation of the Eternal Word which we call the Christ, it is that one which was so frequently upon his lips — "the kingdom of heaven"; and we do not enter the kingdom without at once being conscious of the presence of the heavenly king. Standing in the full light, we cannot but recognise its source.

If the unfolding of this kingdom in the Christ had simply reflected the wisdom of sages or even of prophets, if it had been the sum of all the wisdom possible, through experience, to human intelligence, then it would have been as manifestly a human message in its origin as, not being this, and being as far above this as the heavens are above the earth, it is manifestly divine. If it had followed or sanctioned the motives of which all recorded human development is an illustration, or if it had anticipated all that the progress of human enlightenment and refinement can ever attain by the exaltation and transmutation of these motives to their highest plane of operation, then clearly it is a merely human revelation. Nay, if it had followed the lines of man's religious development; if it had instituted the most sublime ritual, free from all idolatrous perversion or grossness of any sort; if it had given mankind a higher code than that of Moses, or greater prophecies than those of Isaiah; if it had announced a higher spiritual philosophy than that of Plato,— though it had proclaimed that Love was the fulfilling of the Law,— even thus, it would still appear but as an inspired human message, and the Messiah as only a greater priest than Melchisedec, as the chief of prophets, as the purest of

philosophers. All such manifestations, however glorious, not only lie within the scope of human possibilities, under divine auspices, but would no more seem to transcend experience than the genius of a Beethoven or of a Shakespeare; they would not fulfil the spiritual expectation of a Saviour. For this expectation, while it has no comfort in his appearing with all the manifestations of omnipotence and omniscience, or in such a shape as shall transcend the human type, yet looks for something beyond the range of human experience — for the perfection of the type in One who, while on earth and wholly man, shall be "the Son of Man which is in heaven," in the bosom of the Father. This is the expectation of the sons of God, which our Lord hath fulfilled.

We may put aside the legend, as the sceptic calls it, of his miraculous birth, and his miracles themselves; we may ignore the assertion of his claims by the evangelists; we may reject the decrees of ecclesiastical councils — yet there remains the Christ, at once the completion of our humanity and the complete revelation of the Father. Here we affirm nothing on grounds of authority, or of logic; we feel, we believe. It is an immediate impression, a vital communication.

And it is the communication of a New Life — of a new principle or spring of action, (new, that is, unto human experience,) reversing the operation of human energies at their very source. This new principle is not one which simply accelerates progress in lines already taken, or which simply transmutes our life from a lower to a higher plane — it is *regenerative*. It is operative only as man is *born again*. And as the first birth is associated directly with a divine power, with the Father of Spirits, in like manner do we identify with the same power this regenerative principle.

IV

The Negative Impression of Christ's Divinity.

It is true that we obtain, by contrast with other men, a negative impression of our Lord's divinity. Napoleon said, "I know men, and I tell you Jesus Christ was not a man." A still stronger feeling of this sort arises from a comparison of the kingdom which Christ came to establish with all the kingdoms established by the wisest and mightiest of earthly conquerors, or with all the ideal schemes of life suggested by philosophers and reformers. Such comparisons may lead to a presumption or even to a conviction, but not to the direct vision of the truth, which is the reflex of the new birth.

Every ray of vital heat and light which proceeds from this central sun of a new (freshly manifest) system sets him apart, distinguishing him so absolutely from all men, who, either with or without divine inspiration, have sought to reveal divine life and truth, that we need rather the assurance of his humanity — that he was "very man" — than of his divinity. And it was this assurance that he sought chiefly to give, calling himself invariably the Son of Man — more desirous of convincing us that he was in very deed one of us than that he came down from heaven. A man claiming to be divine would, in every important respect, have reversed the attitude of this divine being forever insisting upon his humanity. He would, at every step, have betrayed the taint of the worldly scheme of life, even in his antagonism to that scheme. He would have been an ascetic. His utterances of truths declared by him to be divine would have taken the *form* at least of worldly wisdom, would have shown some measure of sophistication, some sign of premeditated art, of logical analysis, or

of dogmatism; he would have laid stress upon arbitrary authority, upon rules of life; he would have shown some tendency toward the elaboration of a system, ethical or theological, and toward some formal organisation based upon worldly motives and following worldly methods.

On the contrary, we behold a man who never departs from the divine ways in attitude or action or speech.

Though we give the rationalist full scope for his destructive criticism; though we admit that the evangelists may have misquoted or misconstrued his discourses, owing to their own ignorance and perversion — yet is there a limit to this work of demolition. John may have given his Master's words the tinge of his own thought; Matthew and Mark may have been so far influenced by superstition (in a most superstitious age) as to have, to some degree, marred the perspective of their Memorabilia, by bringing to the foreground a miraculous element which the Master himself would have subordinated; still there remains a full body of our Lord's utterances — of which the Sermon on the Mount is representative — before which the critic himself stands in confessed impotence, since not only could these utterances not have been invented by the evangelists, but their like had never leaped from human lips — so that the truths revealed were indeed those which "had been hid from the foundation of the world."

Thanks, O thou most unsparing of critics, for thou hast done for Christ a greater work than have all the apologists of miracles, of tradition, of infallible inspiration; for thou hast cleared away from the matchless edifice all the vain scaffoldings, all the frail supports of merely human construction, and yet the mighty temple remaineth, founded upon the solid rock which thou hast laid bare; thou hast caused the Perfect Type to stand

out in shining light against the imperfection of all other types!

It has not been the divine purpose, in inspiration, to veil the weakness or narrowness or even the perverse passions of the human medium. There were accommodations to the weakness of human hearts in the Mosaic law. In David, in the prophets, in the evangelists, in the apostles, the human mask is maintained with its imperfections. It is as if it were intended that the darkness of all other revelations should be the foil to the unalloyed brightness of the supreme and direct revelation in Christ, even as an artist amasses clouds of blackness if he would paint a diamond.

Nevertheless these contrasts lead only to a negative conviction of the divinity of our Lord — a conviction through logical exclusion. They have a tendency to mislead, inasmuch as, on the one hand, they would seem to exclude one so conspicuously divine from his humanity, while, on the other, they would seem to exclude man from his divinity. But, unto him that is born again, there is, with his new life, given him also a new light, whereby he sees, through the restoration of his own humanity, how verily the Christ is the whole man, and, by himself becoming a son of God, how verily Christ is the Eternal Son, his elder brother, the First Begotten. In this vision, the line of separation between the human and the divine has vanished, not only in our Lord, but also in those who, through the new birth, are with him "in the bosom of the Father." It is the union of the Bride with the Bridegroom, only partially represented, indeed, in the case of individual regeneration, but to be fully realised in the regeneration of humanity.

V

But shall we say, then, that our Lord is the Son of God only as is every man that is born again?

The likeness of our Sonship unto his is dwelt upon and magnified, because it is a saving truth; and, for this reason, also, it is especially vital and essential as an element of our faith. It is this likeness which is set forth in the Incarnation. When Simon Peter said unto him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," then "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.'" It is one of the limitations of the Incarnation that it cannot manifest that wherein our Lord's Sonship differs from ours, but only its likeness; and while this likeness is so fully revealed, for our salvation, in the Emanuel, the unlikeness is carefully veiled and guarded, lest it should be identified with this visible and temporal manifestation. "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." These who were so near unto him had received the new life and a spiritual revelation that overleaped the limitations of flesh and blood; but others might be misled by a premature acceptance of the truth of his special Sonship, (premature because accepted from without, and not through an inward revelation,) confounding this Sonship with his bodily presence.

The Special Sonship a Spiritual Apprehension.

Through the Incarnation, the Son reveals the Father, bringing Him near unto us, as God dwelling with us, but even this revelation suffers from the emphasis of the visible; and the inward revelation of the Spirit is necessary to true discernment, so that the Father shall not be lim-

ited to the earthly manifestation, but shall be known as "our Father which is in heaven." And the word of the Son concerning Him is the leading unto this spiritual discernment. So it is only the Father that knows the Eternal Son, and that reveals him unto those to whom He has Himself been shown by the Son of Man; and it is thus that we know "the Son of Man which is in heaven." And when our Lord has ascended into heaven, when his incarnation is no longer in the way of that spiritual discernment unto which it leads, then, the veil having been rent in twain, the work of the Son of Man in the flesh having been finished, the perfect spiritual revelation is possible. Our Lord himself taught his disciples that he must first go away before the truth in all its fulness could be shown even unto them.

As the Incarnation is necessary, because of our weakness, bringing the kingdom nigh unto us, so in order that we may spiritually discern this kingdom as the kingdom of heaven, it is equally necessary that the flesh should be put aside and that the body of our Lord should be removed utterly from our sight. It is of himself as incarnate that he saith "the things concerning me have an end"; but there remain the things concerning him which have no end, which are "eternal in the heavens"; and of these things which remain are not only that type to which, as the image of the Son of Man, we are to conform, and the love wherewith he hath loved us, but also his eternal Sonship and the love wherewith the Father hath loved him from the foundation of the world.

VI

THERE must have been, as our Lord grew in wisdom and in favor with God and man, a Divine Sense, a direct illumination, entirely different from that which in other men we call inspiration — a sense of his eternal Sonship. This was incommunicable to others, except through the revelation of it unto them by the same spirit which was in him. What Simon Peter discerned through such a revelation must have been known unto our Lord directly. It was not a part of his consciousness, which was wholly human, but rather comprehended this consciousness, making it, therefore, wholly divine. It was thus that a directly divine revelation through him was possible, transcending the limitations of the Incarnation.

The Divine Sense in Christ.

Insistently human, clinging unto us in his utmost exaltation, and most tenaciously unto the most sinful, it is his limited and incarnate existence, the part which he has in common with us, his human consciousness, which he always calls the "me." That other and divine sense, which encompasses his human consciousness, and which with him he would have encompass all humanity, he refers to "the Father."

In the Gospel, all the names of God — the Father, the Spirit, the Son — are inter-fluent. Instead of definition there is confusion, which, from a theological point of view, would seem to be a careless confusion. It is the divine seal upon the Divine Oneness — an edict against all attempts at division, discrimination, or definition, against the formation of a fixed Christian polytheism. Thus what is here called the Divine Sense in our Lord (a sense of divine potency and wisdom) may be regarded inter-

changeably as a sense of the Spirit, of the Father, or of the Eternal Son. It is moreover a sense of regenerate humanity, which, in our Lord's view, is identified with him, glorified with the glory he had with the Father before the world was, Sent even as he is Sent, one with him and the Father, and to be with him where he is.

It is through this divine sense that he feels himself to be "the Sent." It is not so much a sense of omnipotence and omniscience as of love. It is his Father's kingdom that he establishes and unfolds — a spiritual kingdom, whose law is Love. Humanity has been committed unto him by the Father, who has "given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life."

VII

The Hosannas of the Children.

WHATEVER we may think of those outward incidents of our Lord's life — the star in the East, heralding his advent, the visit of the Magi, the descent of the dove upon him in baptism, and the voices at various times speaking from the heavens and confirming his special Sonship — whether we regard them as actual occurrences or as the creations of an exalted imagination, we see in them such concurrent fitness and correspondence that they never surprise us, seeming coincident rather than accidental. If the children should refrain from hosannas, the very stones would cry out. Not one of these wonders is essential to our faith, yet how readily our faith leans to them! They correspond to man's ideas of divine manifestation rather than to divine methods of manifestation, as shown in Nature; and therefore do they especially show what impression our Lord's divinity has made upon the minds of his followers. As grounds of faith they are inadequate, since

faith must first exist in order that they should have any significance.

The Spiritual Generation cannot be regarded as an outward incident. In its very nature it would seem to be especially concordant with faith. No other recorded miracle, save that of the Resurrection, rises to the same height. These two have with each other a special correspondence, and both are the subjects of prophetic utterance; yet our Lord speaks often to his disciples of the Resurrection, but never of his miraculous birth; indeed, he speaks of the Resurrection as the one sign given unto men. The one has a vital meaning to our faith which the other has not. The one is dwelt upon both in the Gospels and Epistles, while the other is, in the Gospel narrative, simply mentioned and afterward ignored.

They who would lead us away from our Lord by denying his miraculous conception, saying that it is wholly legendary and an afterthought, only thereby draw us nearer unto him. On the other hand it is quite possible for the theologian — with an ulterior logical intention wholly alien to the Gospel narrative — to so far remove our Lord from us that we may no longer say "Unto *us* a Son is born." The faith of children has no stress of logic in it, as has a dogma. We may accept this story of our Lord's birth, (which is, after all, inadequate to the full expression of our belief in his divinity,) without associating with it logical consequences, and still hold fast to the genealogies of the Gospel and to the entire humanity of our Emanuel. If we regard his own utterances, it is of this he gives us the fullest assurance. We are accustomed to make mental discriminations, readily defining what was unto him, even in his human consciousness, indefinable. What we studiously separate he confounded. In him the human

was united to the divine—"I and my Father are one." So through him was this union to be realised for all humanity. This was his mission. Because of our very imperfection we fail of that divine confusion which was in him, as it is also in the unsophisticated children to whom he giveth power to become the sons of God.

It is not expected of the disciple that he should be more than his lord, it is enough that he should be as his lord. Our Lord had the following will and the waiting faith. He waited until his hour should come. And the divine power which encompassed him had no jealousy in that he so closely linked himself with humanity and no impatience because of the waiting. As the Lord waited, so his disciples waited. It was not expected that they would at once receive all truth. "Have I been *so long time* with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" But the revelation is not even yet perfect—"the time cometh, when I shall speak to you no longer in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father."

VIII

The Heritage of a Perverse Nature.

The Incarnation involved the heritage of sin. If our Lord was tempted in all points like as we are, he must have been tempted from within. In his very birth he took upon him our sin and our infirmities—in so far as sin and infirmity are inseparable from our nature. No man inherits sin but only the aptitude which, in all other men save our Lord, has become sin. In taking our flesh, Jesus assumed an estate inferior to that of Adam, not only as to this inher-

itance, but in that he came into a perverted, worldly system, and was subject to its temptations.

As to his environment, it was comparatively fortunate. If he had been a native of Jerusalem, he would have been subject to peculiar temptations. He would have been constantly within the atmosphere of the temple and under the influence of its imposing ceremonial. It was doubtless more consistent with the divine purpose concerning him that his docile and peculiarly susceptible childhood should be passed in the hill-country of Judea, among the shepherds, and in loving communion with Nature. In his youth, he was not only divinely guarded but divinely stimulated. The voices of the Prophets — native to this north country — reached him here. The simple worship of the Synagogue was congenial to all heaven-born impulses. No spot on earth could have been chosen more favorable to his gracious growth.

And when every year he went up with his kindred to Jerusalem, and the worldliness of the state religion came within his observation, what wonder that it prompted many questions which he put to the learned doctors in the temple, or that from his strong prophetic nurture he should have many answers for their questions. There was a spirit in him growing up to that point when he should take the scourge in hand and drive out of the sacred enclosure the beasts brought there for sale, and overturn the tables of the money-changers, and bid those who had sacred doves there to be sold to "take these things away." This authoritative action was, indeed, one of the earliest public manifestations of the divine power in him.

But beneath the surface of this quiet country life, what divine tumult in our Lord's bosom! It was not the tumult of a strained conflict; but forever there was that

in the nature which he had assumed which rose up in him to meet the divine sense in him — discords momentarily held in suspense but immediately resolved. There were no problems, no questionings, no solicitudes, for he always listened unto the Father and did His will. The discords in the world without came also into the field of this divine sense and were in like manner resolved. Across these waves ever rising, ever subsiding, what expansion, what awful enlargement of view, out, out on every side to the far horizon of a new kingdom!

IX

The Great Temptation.

But now one mighty wave arises, so high that the evangelist will have it that Satan taketh him up into a high mountain; but it is mightier than Satan! In connection with his mission on earth, with this very divine sense in him, there comes to him a critical moment of trial such as never before or since came to any man. "To be tempted of the Devil!" Nay, the very Prophets are here with their prefigurement of a limitless and endless kingdom! The moment has come when he for the first time feels the power over all flesh committed unto him. "And unto him every knee shall bow." In this moment of exaltation, there rises out of the depths of his human nature a Voice, that even in its temptation towers mountain high, and that, if followed, will bring a deluge of blood upon the earth and give us a Mahomet in the place of the Christ.

The manifestation is but for a moment — this flashing upon his vision of "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time." The divine power encompasses him; the Father is with him, with no other help than He gives in such a crisis to every one who does

His will; the mighty wave subsides — this harshest of discords has been resolved in the peace of the kingdom. And when our Lord goes into the Synagogue, there shall be handed him a book, and he shall read therefrom the true prophecy: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And when, toward the end of his earthly career, he makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, it is upon an ass's colt, with children following, singing hosannas. But never is he called king save by the Magi at his birth, and in the mocking legend upon his cross.

X

THERE was something in our Lord's nature, then, which was to be overcome, to be reconciled to the very kingdom he came to establish — nay, in an especial sense he overcame the world, including his own heritage of its sin, so that he said of himself that the Father had sanctified him. The world which draws all men into its vortex had its hold also upon him.

"Whom the Father hath Sanctified."

In all these years of sanctification through the indwelling Father, it was that which was being sanctified, as well as the sanctification itself, which prepared him for his great mission. He must know in his own heart the strength of the world; and in some respects he knew it as no other man has ever known it. All that was in his humanity rose up to meet the divine sense, and, though it had no mastery over him, it was wholly known in every shade and variation of its perversity. This knowledge was clearer because

of the indwelling God; clearer also because he received ever more and more fully the divine life — for one knows not the strength of the drawing of this world by yielding thereunto but by his withdrawing. The sinful life blinds the soul to the knowledge of sin, while the presence of the Spirit convinceth thereof.

Our Lord at every step stood upon a precipice. The difference between him and other men was that he saw the yawning depth beneath, by the light from above. He ever heard the voice calling unto him from the depth, "Cast thyself downward," and he knew the voice as one that rose out of his human nature. The precipice itself represented unto him the depth to which that nature had fallen and the readiness of the falling; and the voices from its lowest deep were, through his complete assumption of that nature and his share in its awful past, familiar voices. It was not only a part of his Passion, but the very essence of his Compassion, that he should drink the cup offered him to its dregs — that he should fully comprehend the intimacies of sin as a bosom-companion, which slept not, but clung unto him, drawing him through every sensitive fibre of his being, and, not being able to draw him down, was lifted up with him into that divine light and love, that in the sanctification of his nature illustrated the sanctification of humanity. It is thus that he is in a peculiar sense our elder brother.

We see then what our Lord meant when he said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." We see also with what intimate comprehension, from his own knowledge, he traces sin to its true source, in the human heart, out of which are the issues of life.

XI

THE sinlessness of our Lord is in the fact that there was in him no development of a sinful nature. He knew hate at its very source, since it had shown itself unto him, but it was no sooner manifest than, coming into the divine light, it was slain of love. He knew the perversity of human nature, but in his life there was no perversion. His will was in harmony with the divine will, and, though inheriting degenerate tendencies, his life reversed the direction of all degenerate development, restoring for us the broken type of humanity. This union with the Father is not presented to us as something suddenly perfected, but as a growth, and unto the same perfectness through growth are we also called.

His Sinlessness.

It is not a perfectness which excludes the possibility of human frailty. There are moments, even in our Lord's life, when the frailty of the human nature is manifest. Such a moment was that in Gethsemane when the cup, though not put aside, was held in a trembling hand. He met death not as a Stoic, nor with the strained muscle of the gladiator; the agony of the Garden was that of relaxation — of submission at once to the physical tremor, which had its way, and to the will of the Father, which must also have its way. Then there was that other moment, on the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" a moment when the divine presence was eclipsed by heavy darkness; and to him, unto whom this presence had been the life of his life, what darkness! It is the final illustration of the lesson he had so often taught his disciples — that his word and his work were not of himself, and that without the Father he was nothing.

Behold him then, whose spiritual name is the Eternal Son, in this one moment of mortal agony, left helpless and nameless, lest any man should identify his saving power with his bodily presence!

XII

The Glory of all Flesh.

And yet is his flesh — that in itself is nothing — the veil, as St. Paul calls it, the transparency, through which shineth the glory of God, that illuminates and saves the world. Hitherto Nature had been this veil, through which the same glory had shined, but was only dimly seen of men. Now is this glory intensified in the body of our Lord, who, as the Bridegroom, is flesh of our flesh. And power hath been given him over all flesh.

It is only in this view that we may comprehend the miracles of our Lord — those wondrous manifestations of divine love which are for the most part works of healing and restoration. They are prompted by his compassion, but he shows this power only as the occasion for its exercise is directly in his way. In many cases those who are healed are enjoined to secrecy. He is solicitous lest he should seem to make a display of this power, thus appealing to the superstitious that seek after a sign. He teaches his disciples that it is not he but the Father that doeth these things, and that the same power is theirs through faith. He is more jealous for man's divinity than for his own. Why should he show what is possible to God? It is what is possible to man, through faith, that he illustrates.

And this power is committed unto him — as representing humanity and at the same time revealing the Father — without measure, including the forgiveness of sins. This

is shown in the healing of the man sick of the palsy. Before the healing he declared the forgiveness. And when those about him marvelled, asking, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" he said, "Whether is easier to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'; or to say, 'Arise, and take up thy bed and walk'? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he saith unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, 'Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house.'" Our Lord here seems to recognise some connection between the sin and the disease, and he makes the cure complete, remitting as well as healing. In all cases the divine power in him to heal was shown as a sign of the saving power. His compassion for the multitude was not only because they had bodily infirmities but because they were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. He saw them flocking about him that he might heal them, and he healed many. But he saw a larger gathering, that no man could number, the flock of the forgiven.

And as he gives his disciples the power of healing, he gives them also this power of forgiveness. His gospel is a gospel of forgiveness. The healing is incidental and secondary. The power of our Lord to give deliverance to the captives is not confined to the loosing of material bonds; it includes a complete deliverance, the liberty of the soul.

Forgiveness is here something more than a declaration of absolution, else it were not an exercise of power. All sin is forgiven by the Father, and unconditionally; but in Christ there is something more than a message unto men declaring this divine absolution; it is a part of his "power over all flesh" that he communicates the absolution, as unto the man sick of the palsy. The power enters into this communication—a life which revives the palsied soul

as it does the palsied limbs. One may grope blindly upon the earth under an unseen heaven of forgiving love. But when the Lord passes—he who has taken our flesh that he may reveal the Father by a vital communication —then this one stricken with infirmity will stand up straight before God; he will take up his bed and walk. Communicated forgiveness is salvation.

In the Resurrection of our Lord—the one great miracle that is an essential and vital part of his revelation—this "power over all flesh" has its most glorious meaning. Here is this veil of the flesh most transparent, and the divine power is indeed communicated without measure —the communication of an endless life. For behold, this flesh is dead, utterly helpless and powerless of itself, yet God raiseth it, loosing the bonds of death itself. All the meanings of the Incarnation and of the Kingdom itself have here their consummation. It figures the new-birth, this rising from the dead through the quickening Spirit. The sacrament of Baptism receives from it new significance—though it is his peculiar baptism, not of water but of flame. It shows not only the life given unto men but the "abundant life," life overflowing its set bounds. It teaches the lesson of all growth. The seed must die that it may have new life. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in strength." But for what the Resurrection is in itself—the revelation of an endless life—it transcends all these teaching images.

What a transparency — this thin veil disclosing immortality! What appearings and disappearings! Now he is seen of Mary Magdalen, and she must not touch him, lest her great faith be confused, being drawn down to his visible presence instead of looking after him into heaven. Then again he is seen of Thomas, unto whose weak faith he lends his pierced hands and side.

It is in the Resurrection that we most clearly see at once the limitations of the Incarnation and its measureless glory, which all flesh shareth.

In the Gospel narrative there is no mention of any feature of our Lord's personal appearance. His countenance is dislimned, that we may behold only his spiritual likeness. His flesh and his blood are ours in a holy sacrament,— in the symbol of bread, which signifies our divine nourishment, and of wine, which signifies our divine liberation,— and yet he says unto us, "The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are the life."

XIII

WHAT is the meaning of this — that his words are the life? He saith that these are the bread from heaven, that heaven and earth shall pass away, but they shall not pass away. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God. It is the truth that shall make us free, and his word is truth. His Word.

Of this that we have called the Divine Sense or Divine Power, and which our Lord calls the Father in him, the indwelling God, we have here the consummate revelation. As the Incarnation is the intensification of all embodied truth, so the articulate word is the intensification of the Eternal Word.

Speech is the distinctive manifestation of human vitality. The life which sleeps in the mineral, which dreams in the vegetable, and which awakes in the animal, in man speaks. Speech is the explosion of the subtlest of vital forces, informed by the highest intelligence. Homer gives it wings, and verily it has for its medium that which is the realm of

all winged creatures, the freest and most universal fluid in nature; and if by resistance its vibrant flight be broken short, it is reflected in the echo — this return showing how truly it has kept its vocal shape. The air is full of these flying voices, in quick exclamations — prayers and curses — voices that in their quickest flight take the shape of song, piercing the heavens. It is that which is spoken *(fatum)* which is decreed, and in the beginning it is significant of the creative act. What wonder, then, that speech is held to be divine, that the pentecostal spirit is shaped in tongues of flame, and that the sum of all divine manifestation, articulate or inarticulate, should be called the Word?

Now, since he who has taken our flesh has also taken our speech, if he be indeed the Word become flesh, we shall see that the words which he speaks are of God, so that through them the limitations of the Incarnation are transcended in a living current that has free course everywhere and forever; for, while the fleshly appearing is only for a season, the Word is the seed whose field is the world, perennially sown and harvested until the end.

The utterances of our Lord may not be separated from his incarnation; their life is in his life; they are illustrated by all that was accomplished in him upon the earth. If the Word is the seed, his earthly life as the Son of Man was the first fruits thereof. None the less is it true that it is the Word which especially designates him as the divinely Sent.

XIV

We have no touchstone of any divine trait save in Nature until our Lord appears; and it is only as we see that the God indwelling in his life and word is the

same as the God immanent in Nature that we know him as the incarnate Word. He illustrates all the spiritual meanings of Nature, and the study of these in connection with him is the most suggestive and fruitful that could occupy the minds of his followers.

Correspondence with Nature.

If man had from the beginning lived a spiritual life, having the fulness of the knowledge and love of God, such would have been his constant study, only the normal human type — as Man, Woman, and Child — would have taken the place now held by our Lord in this wonderful harmony. Man in the image of God would have stood for God in the image of man. St. Paul has very significantly indicated the distinction between the two types, calling the first man Adam a "living soul" and the last Adam a "quickening spirit." From the first type, reflecting the divine image and traits in Nature, man fell, becoming spiritually dead; through the second, which assumed the degenerate human nature and at the same time revealed the Father, man is restored to harmony with God and His Nature.

Nature is not silent as to the spiritual life. The lack is in us, not only in that we have not ears to hear, but in that we confront Nature with the questioning mind rather than with the receptive spirit. It is a part of our degeneracy that we put the wrong questions to Nature, or, rather, that we are satisfied with her disclosures of types and laws and forces, and that, suggestive as these disclosures would be to our spiritual insight, we insistently choose to limit them to our material uses or to the satisfaction of our mental curiosity.

Thus it is that, even so long after the advent of the last Adam — the quickening spirit — we have still so narrow and unfruitful comprehension of Nature and her spiritual

intimations. We have not been quickened by the Spirit to the higher quest either in our study of Nature or in our contemplation of Christ, who is her counterpart in the great harmony of divine truth. Physical science has, in its naked analyses — expressed in classifications, formulæ, definition of proportions, appreciation of forces — fallen short of the higher truths of Nature, as Christian Theology, in its definition of attributes and hypostases, has fallen short of the divine love and wisdom revealed in our Lord. From the merely mental study of Nature we arrive only at a conception of Power and Design, and of these simply with reference to the effects produced. It is true that incidentally there is evolved a spiritual suggestion — as in connection with the immensity of the universe disclosed by the telescope — and the soul of man is awakened and expanded. Often, too, in our experiments with the subtle forces of Nature, there is flashed upon us the reflex of a great spiritual truth. The poet has a nearer approach to the divine wisdom in Nature, and, to an interpreter like Ruskin, her skies and her waters become scrolls of beautiful truths — scrolls that are palimpsests, written over and over day after day.

But what are these divine traits of Nature, appealing to something higher than a mental or æsthetic interest, and having a spiritual significance, and how are these traits reflected in our Lord?

XV

First of all, it is the spontaneity of Nature that impresses our spiritual sensibility. Every unfolding is as fresh as if it were the first offspring of life; after endless repetition this utter newness of life is that of an original creation. This directness, or immediateness, of Nature's

processes reflects the unconscious innocence of childhood, which "taketh no thought."

The same trait is characteristic of our Lord's sayings. They are not lore; they betray no premeditation, no memory of something said before, no conscious reflection of any sort. We never think of him as having learned what he teaches, as having in any way caught it from another, save as he has received it directly from the Father. His speech shows no backward movement of thought—it is as direct as flame. His Parables are involutes that unfold as spontaneously as the leaves in springtime. The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount are spiritual flowers. They open upon us like the lilies. They are not elaborations or logical sequences, though heavenly wise and vital. So far are they from all the maxims drawn from experience that, to any one regarding them in the light of experience, they are paradoxes, though unto the spiritual sense they are intuitions.

Spontaneity of Nature.

His sayings not only reflect the spontaneity of Nature, but they directly lead us to the contemplation of this divine trait as one that we should adopt—as characteristic of the spiritual life. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin."

The great perversion of our life is that we have not followed the leading of the Eternal Word in Nature. In the place of this spontaneity we have put the conscious effort of our self-will, the result of which is an artificial life. We prefer to "take thought," to build up our life on a notional basis, to give prominence to the operations of our understanding, which are mediate and secondary. These operations are not contrary to or inconsistent with the highest spiritual life, but in that life they are hidden, being subordinated, as they are in those processes of our individual

or associative life which most nearly simulate those of Nature, as in walking or in the making of a language. And, even in those processes which are most artificial, where the conscious effort is most apparent, Nature has so much her way with us, that through constant repetition our skill and training become automatic, simulating the spontaneity of Nature. In all education the conscious is relegated to the unconscious, and the result is what we call a "Second Nature."

Now our Lord leads us not to the second but to the first Nature, not to an artificial simulation of her life, but to the same spontaneity, through regeneration.

XVI

The Germinative Principle.

When our Lord saith unto Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," thus announcing the germinative principle of the spiritual life, he is at once in accord with Nature and in contradiction with all the maxims of human experience. Philosophy teaches us that character is transformed by a change of environment, by education and training. But not so the Master, who sees that new wine cannot be put into old bottles, that the whitewashing of a sepulchre in no wise cleanses it, that the new growth must be from the very seed. The dynamics of Nature is substituted for the mechanics of all human systems of reform. In Nature there is no growth that is not a new growth — new from the root.

The kingdom of heaven could not be engrafted upon human civilisation or upon any existing system of religion. No reformation through any external motive or through the adoption of any system of rules would have been a redemption. Man must be born again, not only for

newness of life, but for tenderness. He must have the Child-heart — the heart of a child of God. And our Lord was come for this — not only as the quickening, life-giving spirit, but as the Type to which the new life must conform.

XVII

He is the Lord of Life. "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." It is in this abundance as well as in the newness of life that he is manifest as one with the Father.

The Son completes the Father's work in Nature.

"My Father worketh hitherto and I work." Now if we consider the Father's work in Nature — this manifestation of the Eternal Word — it is not work as we understand work, but an overflowing, spontaneous vitality.

In Nature there is nothing inert; her ways are the ways of life. Her chemistry is so constant, so universal, that the web of her veil shows no interstices. The only breaks and patches in her robe are those which man has made — and these are obstinate blotches, despite the certainty that finally her fluxion must resolve all that man makes and strives to conserve. She puts foremost the best of her life, the supplest and most delicate, having, it would seem, a special delight in her frailest tissues, minding not that they be fleeting and evanescent, so they be but young and tender. She hides her hardness, covering it with living tendrils, and her chemistry of death as unremitting as that of life, so that it seems but the backward movement of her shuttle, brings the brightest hues into her web — showing the flaming banners of her autumn fields. She hurries forward her processes of dissolution — quick in death as she is in life — blowing with violent winds upon all her

funeral pyres, the sooner to put out of sight all evidences of her decay.

All of human faith in a divine salvation that had ever been in the world had been a response to this living Nature as the manifestation of a loving Father, a taking of this Nature to heart, an answer to her morning, when the night was past, and to her springtime, after the desolation of winter. It had been a response not to naked forces, or to those mental statements or generalisations which we call laws, but to ministering vitalities, to a saving life.

And in its ultimate yearning, its utmost reach of hope, this faith of men, as we have seen, so associated their own life with the divine as to give the latter a human embodiment — foreshadowing the incarnate Word — and, in their sacred Mysteries, made bread and wine the sacraments of this vital union. In this we see how the Spirit of Love strove with men — that the Father wrought not only in Nature but in Human Nature, to bring them into harmony, and so to make humanity one with Him.

In the very incarnation of the Word, then, there is the continuation and fulfilment of the Father's work from the beginning. It is not simply a correspondence to Nature, but a union therewith — a union which includes humanity.

We see, also, why our Lord, when he brings us in his sayings face to face with the divine life and light in Nature, revealing her deepest spiritual meanings, seems himself to be that life and light. He has no sooner brought us into the light than straightway it illumines him; and the pulse of the life that has quickened us beats for us only in him. "No man hath seen the Father at any time." It is the Son that revealeth Him; and behold, it is the Son that is revealed unto us by the Father.

Such is this transfiguration of Christ through the Word, which is from the Father, that we comprehend what the Apostle Paul means when he saith, "in him dwelt the fulness of the godhead bodily." The Christ-nature is seen as the Nature-Christ.

XVIII

The Realism of Nature and of the Christ Life.

If our Lord had in his life alone, as the Son of Man, revealed the Father — living sinlessly, healing the sick, raising the dead, giving his life for his brethren, and being himself raised from the dead — the limitations of his incarnation would have thwarted his mission; faith in him would have been confined to those who were the immediate witnesses of that life, and it would have been a limited faith; he could not have been the saviour of humanity save by an inward compulsion. Without the word there is no salvation through faith. "The words that I speak unto you they are the life."

On the other hand the word, without him, would have no vitality. If it were written upon the sky as upon a scroll in letters of fire, it would be of less effect than what in flame is there already written. Spoken unto men out of the clear sky, or in the annunciations of angels, it would be scarcely more effective than voices heard in dreams. Such are not the divine methods of communication. The literal word, loose in the world, without root, has in it no virtue. Voices reaching us thus at random would surprise and bewilder us as would the phenomena of Nature, broken loose from living ways and vital currents, like sourceless streams or sapless branches, or like grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles.

In Nature the continuity is never broken; it is the con-

tinuity of life. In all her spontaneity and directness, every vital current has a medium, which is itself vitalised thereby. There is no *deus ex machina*. While there is freedom of movement, there are no loose wheels. All force is spiritual, yet is there no manifestation of force without embodiment. This is the Realism of Nature. Our Lord signifies this when he saith, "Ye shall know the tree by its fruits." It is, indeed, because of a like continuity in human nature that there can be no new life without regeneration. This is the Realism of the Kingdom.

Shall we then suppose that the divine Word lacks this vital continuity? It is first the vital communication through every embodiment of Nature, to which human faith is a response; and, both in Paganism and in Hebraic Prophecy, this faith reaches forward to an embodiment of the Word as the Son of Man. The ultimate utterance of the Word is, therefore, through the Christ, in whom there is a twofold Realism, since, not breaking the continuity with Nature, he yet appears, not out of the clouds, but taking the seed of man.

XIX

"GRACE and truth came by Jesus Christ"—not only through his gracious works but through the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, that were not written, like the law, on tables of stone, but were to find their lodgment in the hearts of men, who, quickened thereby into new life, were to behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. And this glory transfigures all material Nature, so that we see it not as material but as spiritual; transfigures the body of our Lord so that it becomes our heavenly nourishment; and also transfigures

Nature Glorified in Christ.

all flesh — for it dissolves all things as by fire — so that in him every creature is lifted up as into the very bosom of the Father: all laws reach their divine unity in the Law of Love, which is at once the bond of the universe and the liberty of the sons of God.

Through this glory of the flesh, sensibility has its spiritual restoration. It is not the mind that is next the spirit, but the body. Our Lord, though assuming a degenerate nature, lifts up that nature to a type more glorious than that of Adam, so that the purity of innocence is eclipsed in the white light of the all-dissolving flame of his baptism of love.

Through his saving word, and through his power over all flesh to give eternal life, he has visited us. And once having been seen, nought can efface his divine-human countenance, radiant with the love which casteth out fear. That type, having once been manifest upon the earth, can no more pass away than can his words pass away, until all be fulfilled.

XX

In the light of this transfiguration, Beloved, we comprehend our personal relation to him who is the Lord of Life.

Now if any man says, "Come unto me . . . I am the Way, the Truth, the Life . . . He that believeth in me shall not perish but shall have everlasting life . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . . Follow me . . . Take my yoke upon you . . . Ye believe in God, believe also in me . . . All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth," our attention is arrested by this direct, authoritative voice, and almost instinctively we turn to salute the Master. His loving tone has pierced our inmost need.

The Authoritative Personal Appeal.

Is it not Life that we lack? Who is there that waits not for some angel to stir the life-giving waters? And here Life is offered. And though he who speaks be the lowliest of all men, devoid of material possessions, having not where to lay his head, all the more will we look up to him, expecting the more of the heavenly for what he lacketh of the earthly.

Of all men that have lived upon the earth there has been but one who has uttered such speech. Others have laid down conditions of life, in creeds and philosophies, or have stimulated men to the struggle for life through good works and penances, but he alone has said, "I am the Life."

The appeal to the human heart is as direct and authoritative as that of Nature, who has in the same winning ways offered herself as the divine life from the beginning. But her offer is incomplete; for Nature, in its largest sense, includes humanity, and human nature is not only, through its degeneration, blind and unresponsive to the spiritual meaning and leading of what we call the material universe, but hears not and answers not the voice of the Spirit of Love and Truth that strives within men. Thus lacking life, no man could say unto men, "I am the life"; and there is no redemption of humanity until every man can say this to every other. But our Lord could say it, because he was not only one with Nature but one with the Father; and all the regenerate say it after him, receiving the same life that was in him, each being the Christ unto all men.

He does not say these words until he, "the first-born of many brethren," has been not only sanctified but transfigured and glorified through his full reception of the divine life. There is no room for mysticism here. The new life of the regenerate is the very life he hath, having

the same oneness with Nature and with the Father. There is not one divine life in Nature, and another in Christ, and another in the children of the Kingdom, but it is all one — the life from God. The very essence of our Lord's teaching is that his life and all life is from God. Nor is there room here for theological speculation; for, in the glory that we share with our Lord, the visible is lost in the invisible and eternal; there is no longer a distinction between the material and the spiritual, or between the human and the divine. The Life concerns itself not with the Notional but only with the Real.

We cannot receive the Christ without receiving the Life. "He that hath the Son hath life." The expressions used by him to illustrate our personal relation to him are not mental but real. He is the Good Shepherd, who careth for the sheep, and the sheep know him and hear his voice. Forever, as the Lord of Nature, he is the Universal Shepherd, whose flocks are worlds and systems of worlds. But he has a nearer and more vital relation to the faithful — yet looking ever to the heavenly pastures. He is the vine and we are the branches. It is a heavenly vintage. The root of the vine for him, and for us in him, is the divine life. "Abide in me as I abide in the Father." Even so St. Paul saith "our life is hid with Christ in God." As our nourishment is from Nature, who forever saith, "Take, eat; this is my body," holding forth her bread and wine to man, so unto us he is the bread which came down from heaven. How often do we think of him as breaking bread — the attitude so familiar to his disciples that he was known unto them thereby after his Resurrection. Before he connected this breaking of bread and pouring of wine with his death in their thoughts, he frequently spoke of them as signifying typically the direct reception of life through him. They will remain the ever-

lasting souvenirs, real and vital, and in no sense mystical or allegorical, until he come. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." But here he stands for righteousness, and we are to hunger and thirst for him. What a countersign of faith he gave unto the Canaanitish woman who plead for the crumbs from the Master's table! This table has always been spread before men, but here the Lord of the feast is present. . It is the heavenly feast.

So in all these ways there is the vital continuity — there is no notional leap — yet always there is the divine uplifting, the heavenly exaltation.

We emphasise this realism, this absence of the notional, on the one hand, or of the mystical, on the other, because it is the real that is unto the spiritual as body unto soul, and is nearest thereunto. The current of divine life does not reach us through any mental mediation, but is direct through our Lord — an immediate and vital communication. This is the Real Presence.

XXI

THERE is no supernatural revelation.* Every manifestation of the Divine Life is at once natural and spiritual. Every natural operation is as miraculous as any that is called supernatural, and under the latter designation is included much that is simply anomalous and monstrous. Our Lord's miracles were in harmony with the divine methods and were an illustration of the divine life, which is love. They were always reparative, never destructive. If they excited wonder, it was because men comprehended not the power

Our Lord's Resurrection reveals what Nature intimates.

* This is not a denial of Supernatural Being. But we know Being through its manifestation only, and this manifestation is its nature.

of the divine life. This overflowing, ever new and everlasting life was especially shown in our Lord's Resurrection.

So far from reversing any law of Nature this miracle of the Resurrection is the seal of his oneness with Nature. But for this reappearance, this reincarnation, he would have seemed less than Nature, would have missed the crowning correspondence of his life to hers, and would, moreover, have fallen short of the complete illustration of the saving power of the divine life in man. From the beginning, night had followed day and winter had followed summer — but always night had given place to a new dawn and winter to the freshness of spring-time — symbols of the resurrection even in the Pagan faith. But, in his own type, no such definite sign had ever been given to man. He confronted death, and was no more seen upon the earth — the place which had known him knew him no more. For all her generations outside of man, Nature had proclaimed the endless renewal of life. In his own type, our Lord proclaimed this for man, bringing Immortality to light — so that he truly saith, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Death is swallowed up in Life. Thus is illustrated the continuity of life not only for a generation, for a single embodiment, a single shaping of the type, but forever. This everlastingness of life is not a concern of time. The shape of life — that alone is in time, as it is in space. It is not matter which is eternal, but spirit. Matter endures, the type persists, life itself is eternal. Yet, through this heavenly exaltation, this glory of the Resurrection, not Humanity alone, but all Nature is lifted up: so that the mortality of all flesh is shown as solvent, plastic unto the persistent type, which is endlessly renewed from glory to glory; and the duration of all matter which is its death, is lost in the softness of new beginnings of growth from strength unto strength.

As the Lord of Life, Christ never teaches us the contempt of life. Whatsoever offendeth — that is, whatsoever is in the way of life — is to be cast from us. We are not to fear them that kill the body; it is only spiritual death that is to be feared. To shun this and to turn unto life is to repent; and even in repentance we are not to dwell with our mortal failure and add mortification to mortification, accumulating death. "Let the dead bury their dead, and come and follow me." Leaving behind us this body of death, we press forward to our "high calling," which is unto life.

XXII

THE Divine Life is always and everywhere a saving power. It is such essentially, as being a renewing life. It is regeneration, indeed, that is first, salvation being incidental. Our Lord does not say, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have salvation," but, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life."

Salvation Incidental to the Life.

The spiritual law is the same as the natural: that the new excludes the old. The remission of sins is a vital operation of the new life. It is not remission as of a debt, in the human sense of debit and credit. In such a sense we can no more be debtors unto God than we can become His creditors. We are taught to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." It is understood that this prayer is uttered by the children of the Kingdom; and unto these none can be indebted, since they give for the asking and with no thought of return. The prophetic or spiritual interpretation of even the Mosaic law condemned not only usury but the acceptance of sureties for payment. The word "payment" does not belong to

the language of the Kingdom. God has no debtors, even as we should have none. He has no account with men.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and it has this in common with one who has been seized and imprisoned for debt or trespass—that it is in bonds and in prison, held in captivity by this spiritual death. It is unto this hard master that the sinner is a debtor. It is in the kingdom of this world, and within the circle of its peculiar system of righteousness, that there is debt—aye, and that there is payment unto the uttermost farthing. "If thine eye offend thee"—if it be one of the bonds of this captivity—"pluck it out and cast it from thee. If thy hand offend thee cut it off and cast it from thee." This is not mortification, a penance by which one is freed from debt unto God, or, through supererogation, becomes His creditor, but the surgery that prevents mortification. Unto the softness of the divine spirit there is no bond of debt, or of captivity; here the only possible bond is that of love; the only seizure here is that of the divine life which releases us. Here we stand face to face with the Lamb of God, who healeth all our infirmities, who forgiveth all our sins. And, this forgiveness is, as we have seen, not simply a declaration of absolution, but a vital communication from the Lord of Life. It is a real remission. God does not cease to regard us and treat us as having sinned—He has not from the beginning so regarded and treated us—but His life, received by us, delivers us from sin. It is not only a truth that we are free, but the truth hath made us free.

XXIII

In considering our Lord's relation to sin, by which we call him our Saviour, we must regard it in the light which so illumines him that he says, "I am the Truth." We must put aside all worldly conceptions of God based upon a system of human conventions antagonistic to the truth. We must pass outside of Pilate's judgment room, outside of the circle of human jurisprudence, where the truth is mocked and scourged, and so far away that we may not hear Pilate's question, "What is truth?" In the spiritual world there are no problems. There the truth unfolds itself to all who follow living ways. "He that doeth His will shall know the doctrine." They who seek salvation in unvital ways, through a system of their own devising, who feed upon the dry husks of their own speculation, behold not the truth — they have opinion. To these all life is a problem. The clear vision is unto the pure in heart — unto babes and sucklings.

The Eternal Passion.

Whither our Lord leads, Nature also leads; and often we behold in Nature an expansion of the truth which he has revealed in intense clearness and in a glory that is vitally communicable unto us.

Thus it is with the truth as to the relation of the divine life to sinful human nature. This truth, as it is manifest in Nature, can never be fully comprehended so long as we entertain that philosophical view which removes Nature from her immediate relation to the divine life, or in any way distinguish between her life and it. But when we behold God as in His world, we see that He has always borne man's sins, and has always been his saviour.

No man can put forth his hand, whether for evil or for good, that he does not thereby make God his helper. It

is the everlasting divine Passion — that man forever makes God his associate even in his mistakes, his brutalities, his crimes. And in all this God is his saviour, in that while He suffers the abuse, He has ever in view the right use as ultimate, and strives for this restoration. He ever stands between man and the consequence of even his wilful misdoing. Let a man inflict upon himself a wound, let him injure himself by excesses: he is indeed in the way of death — but, lo, all the strength of this indwelling God seeketh his relief, is set to the healing of his bruises, accommodating itself to the perverse ways he has chosen, in some cases transmuting poison into nourishment, willing not that any should perish. The mark which he sets upon Cain is for his protection. Our sin is forever the burden of His care. In our madness He patiently awaits the sane thought and purpose. If He permits, and becomes the suffering partner of man's evil deeds, it is with a view to righteousness beyond — the righteousness of the Kingdom — to that association with humanity in which He delighteth, man's happiness therein being the reflex of the divine joy. He loveth and suffereth in the one case — man's pain being the reflex of His passion; in the other He loveth and rejoiceth. Helping in all our ways, His ultimate purpose is one of salvation. Say not, then, that in Nature, in the operation of the Eternal Word, there is no healing and no forgiveness.

Behold what long-suffering the Eternal hath had, from the beginning, of man's abuse and torture of His power — all the pure, sweet currents of His loving life made turbid and turned awry through their mingling with the perverse currents of a rebellious humanity, running away from God. Yet He pursueth, following man through every tortuous path of folly and vice and even into the charnel-house of his spiritual corruption.

But he followeth, not with accusation and condemnation but with love, offering at every step a free forgiveness and wooing all souls to the acceptance of His grace.

As our Lord saith, "I come not to condemn the world," so in Nature there is nothing condemnatory, nothing punitive. We cannot bring into her realm the terms of our artificial life. Here we are not under arbitrary commandments, but under laws of life and growth. God's love, not accepted by men, becomes in them what they have made of it; and, being out of harmony therewith, they comprehend it not. Thus it is that men become the accusers; it is they that judge, when they belie His loving pressure upon them and think of Him as a wrathful, avenging Presence, before which they must hide their faces. They translate pains into penalties, while pain is the sign which He, who judgeth not, giveth us for our saving. His pain, reflecting His suffering, compassionately warns us that we are in the way unto death.

But if we heed not this warning, still will He follow, suffering, and putting forth His hand to save; and the further we wander, the more we also suffer, until our pain becomes the worm that dieth not and the flame of His love the fire unquenchable to consume. But it is, indeed, in the very charnel-house of death that His wondrous power is especially shown, when He calleth upon the dead to come forth in their grave-clothes. Even as His judgments are away up out of our sight, untranslatable into the terms of our jurisprudence, so is there no measure for His unspeakable love.

When we become utterly blind and deaf, so that we no longer see Him, or hear His voice in the signs of Nature, He is not weary of following. Behold how closely He presseth upon us, taking our very flesh, our nature, our speech, and calling unto us anew in our own language

what He hath been calling from the beginning, "I am not come to condemn, but to save."

Ah, hard pursuit! It giveth him no rest. He hath not where to lay his head. As good old Bishop Andrewes says, "it bringeth on a sweat of blood"—nay, the very shedding of his blood—all for our deliverance, for the remission of our sins! Panting with mortal exhaustion, he with his last breath forgiveth his tormentors. But Golgotha is only a halting-place. Death hath no power to interrupt his loving quest. Hath he followed us to the very grave? Yet will he rise and follow on to the very gates of heaven—or rather, he will lead thitherward, for the love which followeth the sinner leadeth the redeemed.

XXIV

But, Beloved, we must beware of unwholesome sentimentalism in our thought of God's love as shown either in Nature or in our Lord.

The Loving Anger.

There are in Nature indications of a divine anger—an anger born of love offended and outraged. It is not an accidental manifestation. Those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were not worse than others. It is incident to all wrong-doing, even as are pain and remorse, whereof it is a part. It is an element in the swelling pathos of the divine long-suffering. It enters not only into what man suffers by reason of his perversion, but also into the suffering of the victims of such perversion—the enslaved and the oppressed—moving them to righteous revolution. He who taught us to turn the other cheek to the smiter and to overcome evil with good, said also, "I am not come to bring peace but a sword." There is a resistance which is not of hatred or of revenge, but of a divine motion within us.

XXV

THERE is no need of an atonement to reconcile God unto man. The sufferings of our Lord, including his death, were, as we have seen, but the manifestation in the flesh of the divine suffering from the beginning. Our sins have ever been borne by him. It is only when they are remitted that he ceases to bear them. He is the lamb of God, not the scapegoat.

The Sacrifice of Christ.

We cannot pass from the terms of the Mosaic law or of the Levitical ritual directly to those of the Kingdom.

Both in prophecy and in the Gospel of the Kingdom, love is preferred to sacrifice. When our Lord had expounded the law as summed up in the love of God and the love of man, and the Scribe assented, saying that such love is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices, Jesus answered him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Several times he spoke of his death, but never as a sacrifice. He is the good shepherd who layeth down his life for the sheep. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his brethren. His death is not the redemptive work, but — especially in connection with the following resurrection — the completion on earth of that work — the testament of his love, the seal of a new covenant. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" [referring to the resurrection]. "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Our thoughts are by these sayings carried away as far as possible from Levitical associations, and

are brought as near as possible to a purely natural association. And we are impressed in the same way by what he says at the last supper — the occasion being identical with the feast of the Passover. The paschal lamb was not a sin-offering. He had been in the habit of speaking of his body as the bread from heaven, of which whosoever eateth should not henceforth suffer hunger, adding that whosoever should drink of his blood should not thirst again. His body, his blood, his whole incarnate existence, was given for the life of men and for their deliverance from sin. Now, finally, over the already familiar symbols, he says of the bread, "It is my body which is given for you," and of the wine, "It is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins."

Yet in the deepest spiritual sense, the death of our Lord is a sacrifice "of sweet-smelling savour" unto God. But we must revert to the primitive idea of sacrifice — that of a love-feast in which God is the guest and associate of man. In this uplifted Christ we have the most exalted realisation of this idea. It is here upon the cross that the Son is especially one with the Father, fulfilling to the uttermost His behest, and drawing all men unto him in the same oneness. Here in Christ, God is not being reconciled unto the world, but is reconciling the world unto Himself, bringing His children into that association with Him which constitutes the kingdom of heaven.

And all the faithful are partakers of our Lord's death — of his sacrifice. It is thus that we follow him, taking up our cross, and, joined unto him, become an acceptable offering unto God, so that we are associated with him — both in his life and his death — in his redemptive work, even as we are partakers of his resurrection.

In no mechanical or dramatic sense are our sins imputed unto him, or his righteousness unto us. Our union with him is vital. As he has really borne our sins, so is his righteousness (which is not ethical but spiritual) really ours, as the life of the vine is the life of the branches. Whether indeed we be associated by faith with him, we, of necessity, bear the burden of each other's sins; but, rooted with him in the divine life, we partake of his saving power for the remission of sins.

His entire life was an offering unto God. And in one sense it may be considered a propitiation; for, as there is a divine anger born of love, so born of the same love there is a propitiation which appeases this anger. Keeping the branches tender, softening the heart, and bringing our life into complete harmony with the divine life, he concludes all strife, eases all pain and — by removing the occasion — appeases that divine anger which, in the green tree, warns, but unto the dry is a consuming fire.

XXVI

A WHOLLY impertinent application of the term justice to God has, of necessity, led to a false conception of the nature of our reconciliation unto Him. Justice is not a divine attribute. It has in it no divine quality, no vital meaning, either as applied to Nature or to the kingdom of heaven. Even in human affairs, it has no significance save in connection with the conventional adjustments of a perverted life. Injustice must be manifest before there could be a conception of justice, which is an outward and mechanical righteousness — equity of division, compensation of injuries.

Justice not a Divine Attribute.

In Nature, equilibrium would mean death; no sooner is it restored than it is disturbed, and both the restoration

and the disturbance are through the action of forces, dynamically and normally. No one would think of transferring our term justice to these operations.

Human justice is the righting or the attempt to right a wrong. It is based upon the existence of injury. It is only in its penal exercise that it has any resemblance to aught in Nature, and here only in that it mechanically simulates the pains through which we are divinely warned against the ways of death; and in the attempt to make human penalties restorative there is a beautiful simulation of the saving power manifest in Nature. The scope of this human justice is limited to injury, and even within this scope it is inefficient. Equity may not always be realised. The life taken by violence is not restored by the taking of another. Therefore a distinction is made between this imperfect justice and what is called abstract justice, the latter being referred to God. Moreover the element of vengeance, which human love and wisdom have excluded from the administration of justice, is transferred to the divine administration of absolute justice.

But when we make justice an abstraction, it vanishes altogether. There is nothing absolute except in a notional world. All divine operation is vital and is real. As in us perfect love casteth out fear, so the perfect love of the Father casteth out justice.

The uniformity in the operation of natural laws is not equity. In the processes of Nature there is no administration of judgment. She separates not between the innocent and the guilty. The sun shines and the rain falls alike upon the just and the unjust. The bounty of Nature is not measured out to us according to our deserts. As the harvest is larger than the sowing, so is it with all her giving unto us. She gives for the asking, and even without the asking; all her doors are open unto all, save

in so far as there is the intervention of a perverse human adjustment. She has grace and truth for all, if we comprehend her meanings, but not justice. God hath ever in her invited the human soul to the feast of His love, to association with Him, to complete reconciliation, without conditions.

And our Lord only more effectually invites us to this peace. How often he says, "I am not come to condemn." As he lays aside justice, so he teaches us to judge not. We are not to care for the things in connection with which men value justice. We are to return good for evil. And he teaches this as an imitation of our heavenly Father. Instead of the equities of justice, there are the inequities of love. Unto perverse human judgment, what unfairness there is in the full payment of the laborer who cometh at the eleventh hour to work in the vineyard, even as to the others who have borne the heat and toil of the day! How unsuited to our ideas of equity, the killing of the fatted calf to make a feast for the returned prodigal, who hath wasted his substance in riotous living! How unseemly the especial rejoicing over the one sinner that repenteth more than over the ninety and nine that have never gone astray!

In the illustration of divine judgment given by our Lord, it is a judgment abrogating judgment. There is no reference to innocence or guilt. It is not considered whether men have been righteous; there is no ethical discernment of any sort. Our Lord in the clearest manner teaches us that in the kingdom of heaven there is but one law, the law of love. To give meat to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, to house the stranger, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to minister unto the captive — these are the signs not of righteousness according to any standard of justice, but only of love.

XXVII

Is there then no judgment? Is not God the Judge of all the earth? Nay, do we not believe that our Lord shall come to be our judge?

The Real Judgment.

We have seen how our Lord himself interpreted divine judgment. He regarded it not as the operation of a Higher Law, as men conceive absolute justice, but of an inward law — the law of love. It is not judgment according to an imposed commandment, or according to an abstract mental conception, nor is it a judgment from without. It is self-operative, having in it no ethical quality, but the spontaneity, vitality and reality of Nature.

In our Lord's interpretation we have also a touching illustration of his identification with humanity. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these ye have done it unto me." Here is not a judge, standing outside of that he judgeth. He is the Eternal Word in the hearts of men, as Love, and as a sword also, making keen division: for this judgment is not the verdict of a Law-giver but a discernment, the revelation of a division between the love of the kingdom and the righteousness of this world. In this sense, he ever cometh to judge. In this sense he was a judge while he was upon the earth in the flesh. When the sinful woman was brought before him, it was they that brought her who were driven forth from his presence by the condemnation in their own hearts, while she remained waiting his spoken release, "Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way and sin no more." It is in this sense that those who are united unto him, receiving the divine life, are to judge the world. Yet, in the sense of condemnation, they are to "judge not," leaving this

where it belongs, where he says it already is, in the hearts of men.

This inward judgment has, in the nature of the case, no relation to outward accident. Whosoever puts his hand in the fire it shall be burned. This is simply to say that the fire goes on as before. But that flame which is in us, which is our life — by this we are tried. God in us is both love, the flame of the Spirit, renewing us, if we submit to its mastery, and keeping us in living ways, and a consuming fire if we resist it and are thus cut off from these living ways and become hard and unfruitful. In both cases it is the same love — but its relentless burning of dead branches we call vengeance.

This operation in us is not suspended. The vital continuity is maintained. The flame that builds or that consumes is immediate in its action — it is unquenchable; it goes not out to be revived for building or burning in some other world.

XXVIII

If the divine life, waiting only our acceptance, taketh such mastery of us, filling us to overflowing with its grace and truth, wherefore do we pray?

It is that we have hunger and thirst for this life — and these are prayer. It is that we do not simply submit our wills to His will but co-operate with Him — aspiring for the coming of His kingdom. It is our articulate response to the gracious articulation for us of the divine Word. It is an outspoken loving recognition of an outspoken love. It is the color and fragrance of the flower, the joy of the fruit, which answer unto His quickening — the festival song of the vintage to the Lord of the Vineyard.

Meaning of Prayer.

We pray as our Lord prayeth, and as he teacheth us to pray. God giveth and forgiveth without the asking; but the children ask. The heavenly Father knoweth whereof they have need before they ask Him. But their asking is the crying out of this need — especially for His spiritual gift of eternal life. They do not make petitions as of one who waiteth therefor, and is moved thereby; their asking is as spontaneous as His giving.

They ask in Christ's Name. It is not a condition imposed upon them, but their recognition of what unto them is a reality — that he is the Way of Life. The Father giveth life to all who will receive it, however they may come unto Him. No mediation is necessary as a condition. Our Lord himself reveals the direct relation of every soul unto the heavenly Father, and no idea of mediation is suggested in the prayer he hath taught us. But in all things he hath led, and we have followed. Is he not the first-begotten, the elder brother? Hath he not first shown us the Father? All that we have seen and known, first of all in him, is naturally real to us only in this association. His glory hath been made wholly ours; he hath wholly identified himself with us; and his life in us is a vital communication. Like the man whose sight has been restored, we say, "This we know, that, whereas we were blind, now we see." This is the way we have known. It is a blessed reality, not a notional condition. Moreover, it is in his name that we are united as brethren.

It is only the children who pray — for prayer is only from Faith.

XXIX

Faith. FAITH is our response to the divine life. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." "According to thy faith be it unto thee." The word is ever upon our Lord's lips, and always in this vital connection, never with any intellectual definition thereof. To define it would be to limit it, to bring it within the realm of notions, contracting it to suit the limitations of the understanding. It is of the life, and, having the simplicity of a vital principle, is incapable of analysis.

Faith is something more than a passive attitude — it is hunger and thirst for life. It is a seizure, taking the kingdom by violence. It is the eager response of the human soul to the love of God — a running to meet Him who hath been so long pursuing. It is the answer of the bride to the Bridegroom, being won, and finding Him the one among ten thousand and altogether lovely.

Who shall define it? Who knoweth how the sea answereth the moon in her following tides, save that she followeth? Faith hath in it the mystery of all life; yet is there nothing mystical therein. God in Christ is asking of us only what in the endless wooing of Nature He asketh — desire and a following.

Faith is a correspondence to the kingdom which it embraces. As the one is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, as to its growth, so is the other. It is the receiving without measure of a measureless giving.

Our Lord especially considers faith as related unto himself. "He that believeth in me shall not perish." It is the Father in him that speaks, with pleading hands and unaccusing lips. In receiving him we receive the Father also.

How hath God in Nature wooed the human soul from the beginning — from the heavens above and from the bosom of the earth! Who that hath ears to hear hath not heard these voices, nay these yearnings of Nature, who, like a mother, calleth us to herself? How fragrant her breath, how comforting her balm! Her touch giveth strength. She hath rest for our weariness, taking our burdens if we will but give them up. She bringeth darkness only as a mantle about us, that she may give her beloved sleep. But what greater tenderness is there in this nearer voice, (since it is our very own,) which saith, "Come unto me, ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"!

To come unto him, is to have faith — for he is unto us the living way. He helps us even unto this faith. Had not God first loved us, we had not sought His love. We can be near the kingdom only because it is at hand, near unto us.

The ways of our perverted life are hard ways, and the hardness is in our hearts. If we keep that hardness, if we judge God after our ways and according to the traditions of men, attributing to Him dispositions and qualities which have no meaning apart from human conventions; if we think of Him as condemning us and therefore to be propitiated by sacrifices and penances, or even by good works, and especially if we look upon His Christ as standing between us and His wrath — this Christ who is the revelation of His love — then, if indeed the divine truth hath made any impression upon us, it hath been received into stony ground, and the seed, springing up, is forthwith choked by weeds, and cannot endure the noonday heat.

But, if the quickening Spirit hath had its way with us, then are we born again with the soft, deep heart of the little child that, having nothing, asketh for all things, that

hath no care, no distress, no solicitude, and expecteth only love. This is the faith to which all things are possible. It is the substance of all it hopeth, the vision of what, unto the world, is invisible.

XXX

"MANY are called but few are chosen." The chosen are the cherished, who have received the truth into deeper soil; and they are few, not because of any limitation of the Father's love or because of any arbitrary selection.

The Chosen.

What know we of God's selection? Here also let us beware lest we judge Him according to our ways.

Are the Jews especially chosen? But, behold, it is they who straightway and persistently rejected our Lord. Is it the righteous? Yet it is not the well but the sick that need a physician. Our Lord was seen in the flesh by only a few of a single generation of men. Were those who were thus next him especially favored? But, behold, some poor fishermen of Galilee receive him before his brethren in the flesh; and, of his own disciples, one denieth and another betrayeth him. How straight is the gate, how narrow the way, that leadeth unto life when they who, to the eye of sense, seem nearest thereunto stumble and go astray, finding it not. It is not they who are invited who sit down to this bridal feast, but the poor, the halt, the maimed, and the blind; yet is there not one of these whose place can be there, not having on the wedding garment, not having the child heart.

Our problems are not God's problems. Unto Him there are no problems. We see the God in Christ in the fact that he never suggested enigmas of Providence,

Free-will, Foreknowledge, the Origin of Evil. The problematic situations presented to him — in the cases of the tribute-money, the sinful woman, the woman who had seven husbands — did not elicit from him any discussion of them or any attempt at their solution. He taught through parables, and the parable is an evasion of mental analysis. One of these parables touches this matter of the divine selection. In this parable the world is likened unto a field in which wheat hath been sown and in which the evil one hath sown tares also. Both are left to grow together until the harvest. But the wheat represents not good men but the good seed, and the tares not bad men but the evil seed. After the harvest the tares are burned. "Good is the final end of all."

XXXI

Now, there are those, who, puzzled by the determinations of what seems to them a kind of Destiny, have sought to account for what we call Evil in Nature, including humanity, by representing the universe as a divided realm, a house divided against itself, in which an Evil Power (which they regard as identical with the enemy, or Evil One, introduced into this parable of the wheat and the tares) contends against God. It is not for us to say that there are no sinful, fallen natures outside of the human race. If man could fall from his first estate, why not angels? Nor is it for us to say that, if there be such fallen beings, they have no communication with men, reinforcing what is evil in our own perverse inclinations. Do we not believe in a communion of all saints, not as a vain conception but as a vital association through re-

God's Kingdom not a House divided against itself.

ciprocal influence, so that all the good, being in accord, help each other to higher truth and life? And does not this communion include not only all the redeemed of all time but also all creatures of all worlds who are of the heavenly kingdom? In like manner there is the vital association of all beings not in accord with God's will, but only accordant one with another. But we cannot regard the Father of all as in contention with his creatures — a contention of strife. Nor can we think of Him as having given to any of them powers over man such as He Himself does not exercise — such as do violence unto the freedom of the human will. Least of all can we suppose that He, even for a time, remits His loving strife with men, abandoning them to evil influences. He hath in His universe no selected portion (whether as to time or space) which He calleth His, leaving the residue unto another. All times and all places are His in all His domain. To Him, indeed, in His essential being, there is no time and no space. He regards not the accident of birth or of death: unto Him all existence is present. He is not the God of the dead but of the living. He seeth the end from the beginning.

We see only parts, and perceive only under the forms of our understanding; we see with our eyes, and perceive with our understanding under its limitations. But He seeth all, because He hath not eyes, and in Him is all wisdom, because He hath not understanding. Hence it is that unto us there are problems concerning evil and destiny; but unto Him there is no problem. It is not within the scope of even inspired human logic to define His eternal purposes — least of all to determine how or upon what conditions He shall save His erring children, or what shall be the measure of His salvation.

XXXII

Who shall say that because a few are chosen all will not be saved? Is it not rather true that because of the chosen there is the greater hope for all? All souls are living that have ever lived, and the leaven of the kingdom is sufficient for all; through the vital association of all living, it reaches all. In the interval between our Lord's death and his resurrection was his gracious appearing in hell, according to the Apostles' Creed; and the belief in this visitation is a beautiful indication of a faith that is all-embracing. And, as God striveth with all souls, even those not in accord with Him, so every one that is delivered from the bonds of sin is associated with Him in this striving. All the good — the good in the sense of the kingdom, the Loving Ones — strengthen each other, and their love helps loosen the bonds of them that are still in prison, so that captivity, yea, even the captivity of fallen angels, is led captive.

Universal Salvation.

Our Lord's power is over all flesh — a saving power. Faith, then, the response of his brethren, is catholic, embracing all life within the scope of its hope. In its very nature it is expansive, without arbitrary limitations. It is not Pharisaic, seeing a boundary by which it is separated from any portion of humanity or of the universe.

Our Lord's teaching is clear concerning this boundless love and hope. On that day when in the Synagogue he read the prophecy of Isaiah respecting him, he was speaking to his own people, his neighbors and acquaintances, who had known him as the carpenter's son, and who had so little faith in him that he said unto them, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country."

And he added: "But I tell you of a truth many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; but unto none of these was Elijah sent, but unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but Naaman the Syrian." Now the Jews held themselves to be God's chosen people, and when they heard these words, forecasting our Lord's readier acceptance by the Gentiles than by the Jews, when they were told that salvation was not a merely local affair, but might even temporarily pass by those who called themselves the elect, they were filled with indignation and drove him from their city.

We should beware lest we take any incidental feature of a parable of our Lord's and, by laying special stress thereupon, make it a stumbling-block for our confusion. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the lesson to be received by us is not that there is an impassable chasm between the saint and the sinner, any more than we are taught by it that the distinction between the faithful and the unfaithful is identical with that between the rich and the poor. Our Lord had said, "How difficult it is for them that have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven!" This parable is meant as an illustration of the difficulty—a reinforcement, through an effective picture, of this truth. In the parable of the judgment, as we have seen, the truth which our Lord wished to impress upon his hearers was, not the fact of eternal punishment, or of punishment in any sense—but that love is the principle which is characteristic of the kingdom. We see clearly from what is essential in this parable that God doth not make recompense for what men call goodness, or administer punishment for

what men call evil, but that, without reference to judgment, no one can be a child of the kingdom who loveth not his neighbor — loving without hope of return. This love is the leaven of the kingdom.

By emphasising the incidental features of a parable we are not led into the truth but into falsehood. Thus, from the parable of the vineyard, we would infer that God maketh payment; whereas the meaning of it is that our idea of payment cannot be applied to the kingdom. So, from the parable of the talents we might obtain a sanction for usury. The Hebrew, or rather the Oriental, conception of an Evil Power sharing in the conduct of the universe is incidentally indicated in the parable of the wheat and the tares.

So our Lord incidentally uses terms of the popular faith — such as Gehenna and demoniacal possession — but he is not thereby teaching their existence as truths. He would undoubtedly have spoken of the sun as rising and setting. His mission was not to teach pathology as a science, or astronomy; and, under the limitations of his incarnation, he could have reached scientific truth in no other way than by the ordinary processes of human thought and investigation. What divination there may have been in him, through the indwelling Divine Wisdom, of that harmony which underlies all science, we know not, and can only imagine through what he has revealed of the harmony of the spiritual kingdom. As he gave us here not Science but Life, not ethics but the vital divine and human sympathy (which spiritually are one) that effaces ethics — so, if it had been a part of his mission to fully unfold to us the kingdom of Nature, he would, by supreme divination, have so revealed its harmony as to have transformed what we call physical science. All life would have been shown unto us not as a system of forces

acting upon and through atoms and in accordance with laws expressed through mathematical terms of distances and proportions, but as a universal symphony. But it was the kingdom of heaven and its harmonies that must first be sought; and, in unfolding these, he gave us the key to all other spiritual revelation — even that of Nature.

XXXIII

WHAT, then, is this paradox which opposes the straightness of the way unto Life, and the paucity of its travellers, to a hope that embraces the universe?

Catholicity of Nature and of Christ.

To our limited wisdom it seems a contradiction. But the difficulty thus opposed to infinite grace is human, not divine. Unto the wisdom and power of God, unto the patience of Him to whom a thousand years are but as a day, there is no difficulty. Not even the perverse human will can finally resist his saving power. Not only man, but every living creature, shall join the procession of this triumph. It is not only our life but all life that is hid with Christ in God.

Here Nature fully responds unto the Christ. She shows us, in the ultimate unfolding of her meanings, that all life is one. The law of the falling apple is the law of the star. There can be no covenant that is of God, which embraces a part only of His domain. Distances — these are but the intervals of harmony. That which seems to separate, in reality unites — as the oceans which so long apparently separated the peoples of the earth became the readiest means of communication between them. Obstructions only reveal the passage of mighty forces, as the resisting air causes the flash of lightnings, which would else pass unseen above us from one quarter of the heaven to another.

We think of inorganic matter as that which is most closely linked with the universal life. The mightiest forces seem here to find expression in flaming spheres, moving in vast orbits with marvellous velocities; and yet the merest atom responds to the whole, action and reaction being equal. We are astonished by the potentialities lodged in a single drop of water. But all immensities and all individual atoms — infinite and infinitesimal systems — await with longing expectation that life which is not of their generation, but for which they exist — the life of the organic kingdom, a fresh utterance of the Eternal Word. The most delicate of plants has alliances which comprise not only all the affinities of the inorganic world but some nearer association with and more intimate expression of the divine life, which before has slept in the world but now dreams. In the higher organisation of the animal, the intimacy is still nearer, the expression larger, as if in it the Master Life had found its awakening; and in man, the very child of God, it speaks — word answering unto the Word.

At every step of this progression, there is wider freedom which seems to involve greater separation from the bonds which bind the life back unto the universal life; but the separation is only in appearance; a stronger bond is found in every emancipation, until in man it is religion. As he hath the liberty of the son, there is the strongest tie between him and the Father. The bond is at once direct — in immediate communion — and indirect in that the entire series of affinities, which are, indeed, all bound up in him, lead him back through every showing of the Word in Nature unto the same Father; but in the full spiritual life the indirection of this leading is effaced.

The universal symphony has its response in man, and when he is united, as was our Lord, unto the Divine Life,

with following will and faith, he has the key to the great accord which gives him not only sympathy with Nature, more potent than that he calls his mastery over her, but also sympathy with humanity which has that virtue which was in our Lord's "power over all flesh."

That exaltation of faith which we call inspiration has always this expansion that includes the whole. The prophets had it, and it carried them beyond the boundaries of a provincial religion, so that God seemed unto them not the God of a single race, but of all peoples. John the Evangelist had it; and it led him through the conception of the Everlasting Word to extend the dominion of Grace so that it embraced not only all humanity but all creation. The Apostle Paul had it, and with all the emphasis which he gives to predestination, he declares that God willeth that all men be saved, "especially they that believe."

But they who have known the love of God through the new life see no limit to His salvation. Unto them the whole universe is bound together in vital sympathy, so that there is no suffering but of all, no deliverance but of all. St. Paul conceives of the entire creation as groaning and travailing in pain, because of man's alienation. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God." And he speaks also of "the hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God."

As it is love which unites all, it is love only that comprehends the harmony. Philosophy is not our guide in these living ways. Instead of seizing upon the life, it chases shadows. It correlates all forces and brings us face to face with a God who is Power, not Love. It is encompassed by the shadows of its own creation, and

confounds us with problems, in which, in irreconcilable contradiction, Destiny confronts Free Will, and the individual human soul becomes, in the shadow of the One Power, itself a fleeting shadow, an illusion.

In these ways, it is our Lord that leadeth us. He propounds no problem, for he seeth none. He delivers us from shadows, giving us the true life. He knows the heart of man, and reads the impress upon it of the divine Word, though, like a palimpsest, it hath been written o'er and o'er with perverse interpretations of God and Nature and humanity; he calls him to a new birth, bringing to light the original impress; he restores to man botn himself and Nature, whose divine meanings are all seen to be in harmony with those of the newly revealed Kingdom; and, taking upon himself the type of humanity, he discloses the glory of the type and its persistence in the endless renewal of life.

XXXIV

LIFE is your master, Beloved; and in the blessed Lord ye have found this Master, who, washing his disciples' feet, hath shown that mastery is, first of all, service.

The Child Spirit.

How in all ways hath he broken down the barriers, by which, in our thoughts, the human is separated from the divine, our wills from the will of the Father! In the kingdom every maxim based on worldly experience is reversed. We say unto the child, "Come and be like us." Our Lord saith unto us, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The chief preparation for the kingdom, through the preaching of John the Baptist, was "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children."

This, then, is conversion — to be converted and to become as little children. We must have the faith of the child, who receiveth everything. We commit ourselves wholly to the divine life, whose mastery is ministration. This is the humility of the child — the willingness to be led. Thus was our Lord "meek and lowly of heart," knowing that the divine life would determine its own issues.

The kingdom of heaven is within us only when we have utterly put away from us the wisdom and strength of this world, having the foolishness and weakness of babes. The very seed of the new life — all the husk of it, all save the vital principle itself — must die before it can germinate. In regeneration, not only all that a man hath himself been, but all systems, all forms and all traditions which have taken hold of him, of whatsoever preliminary value or help they may have been to him, must die — all save the vital principle itself, which is of the Spirit. For every new-born child of God there is a new heaven and a new earth.

The husk hath indeed preserved the seed — yet must it die before the seed can spring up. What the seed shall be in its growth — its selection and assimilation of outward elements — must also be determined by the vital principle. Not only out of the regenerate heart are the issues of its life, but the quickening Spirit, in every one that is born again, is a new and vital test of all outside forms and guises of truth. New wine will burst old bottles. All that hath been said "of old time" is subject either to renovation by the quickening Spirit, or to its testing, whether it be indeed the expression of a spiritual truth.

What goeth on in the soil that lieth under this sun of a new heaven, what ploughing of Sorrow, breaking up its hardnesses, what gracious operation of all the elements, or what is the way of the Spirit with the heart of man, we

know not. The kingdom cometh not by observation. We only know that, as our Lord saith, it is within us. It is not a thing of here or there, of yesterday or to-morrow. It is not a matter of environment. It is not a reform. It is a new life — the work within us of the Spirit of Love.

XXXV

Freedom of the Children.

The children are free. Old bonds and liens are loosened. How different is this from all other freedom, such as we think we gain by antagonising evil. We drive out the evil spirit, and the room is swept and garnished; but forthwith it becomes the receptacle of a sevenfold worse spirit — that of self-righteousness, the most effective barrier to divine grace. We destroy giant after giant, and others arise in their places; and what seems to be the development of our strength from this struggle is really a source of weakness. For with our limited powers we are contending against what is inveterately rooted and established, while we ourselves are isolated, cut off from the infinite strength which is of itself sufficient for us, but which entereth not the tense muscles of the gladiator, while it maketh irresistible the soft hand of the child. We build a barrier against the flood, which rises as we build, gathering strength for a ruin that we cannot withstand.

It is the meek who shall inherit the earth. It is the open heart, the loosened hand, which receive the divine strength. We wait upon the Lord. Instead of fighting sin with our puny force — which is, after all, only a dalliance therewith — we accept his life, and, behold, the enemy hath fled. Sin is the business of a heart unoccupied by the divine life.

The tender shoots from the living vine — the fresh im-

pulses of hearts quickened by the Father's love—with what freedom and amplitude of growth do they spread, driving out the weeds, clinging about the old hard lives and pulling them down. So soft, so pliant these child-hearts! Yet they shall occupy the earth. This love is the leaven of the kingdom which leaveneth the whole. It thinketh no evil and hath no fear of evil. For, behold, no sooner is a new child born than its arms fearlessly embrace the unregenerate, taking part in the Father's loving strife with all stray hearts, following in the steps of him who was the friend of publicans and sinners, with the grace not of charity but of equal love. Freed from burdens and bonds, it straightway seeketh to take upon itself the burdens and bonds of others, yet loseth none of its freedom—since love is in its essence free, lightening all heaviness as the sun lifteth the sea; loosening all tension, as it is loosened in sleep; relaxing all restraints.

The freedom of the kingdom bringeth ease, and setteth us in a large place.

It is because of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the hardness of men's hearts that our Lord saith, "Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life." But, when the life is once found, the way is broad and hath no boundaries. "The entrances of the elder world [referring to the life from which man had degenerated] were wide and sure and brought immortal fruit."* "The righteous shall suffer straight things and hope for the wide."† This hope is realised in the kingdom. Therefore our Lord saith, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." As a similitude of spiritual growth, he showeth us the lilies of the field, "which toil not, neither do they spin." Surely the child of God hath left

* II. Esdras, vii. 13. † Ibid., vii. 18.

all care behind. "Take no thought for the morrow." Solicitude and prudence have no place in the spiritual life. There is no mental strain of prevision. "Take no thought what ye shall say . . . it shall be given you what ye shall say." The readiness is all. Our largeness is here, in our reception of the divine life. Here is dilation, while the tension of effort is contraction. It is not the ease of luxury (which is on the contrary sluggish and heavy) but of simplicity, of spontaneity.

The child of God is of necessity an optimist. No problems vex him. The divine life hath no knots or entanglements. We have not only the hope of an endless life, but the kind of hope pertinent to such a life, being partakers in large measure of that divine wisdom which overlooketh the partial and temporal, regarding especially the consummation of all things—the meanings which are spiritual and eternal, which are the meanings of the kingdom.

XXXVI

Freedom from the Power of Worldliness.

The freedom of the kingdom is freedom not from the world, but from the power of the worldly—even from contention therewith. We may receive blows, persecutions, death; but it is not what is done unto us which is our life, but what we ourselves do and are, or rather what God doeth and is in us. We are surrounded by a system which is not of the kingdom. It is not next our hearts. Its struggles and its problems are not ours save by sufferance or adoption—they are no essential part of our spiritual life.

Do the nations make war one upon another? What is that to us, save in so far as our lives may illustrate the love which extinguishes strife? They will in time—and the more speedily the more skilled they become in the

arts of war — reach an equilibrium of forces, a balance of power which they call peace; they may even become so wise in their generation as, from purely worldly motives, to regard all war as a foolish and useless waste of force and material, and establish a universal peace. But while, from different motives, we may concur with such counsels, welcoming even this *simulacrum* of the peace of God, yet we know its hollowness; it is no response to our living faith.

Is there injustice in the world? We are touched with compassion for the sufferings of the oppressed, and still more for the hardness of the hearts of the oppressors. But do we oppose justice to this injustice? It is injustice that begets what the world calls justice. The universality of selfishness will bring about an equilibrium of its energies — a balancing of the scales. All ethical demands will be met; but, the hardness of heart remaining, what rejoicing have we in such equity, though, not being Quietists, we may do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do in behalf of even this semblance of righteousness? It is not the righteousness of the kingdom. Our hope is in the inequities of divine and human love.

XXXVII

The freedom of the Kingdom is a freedom from ethical obligations — from what the world calls conscience.

Freedom from Ethical Obligation.

The new birth does not abolish any physical or mental or spiritual power which man has by nature, nor any natural manifestation thereof. The whole man is regenerated; and all natural obligations are strengthened — but not as obligations; there is introduced the spiritual in place of the ethical motive of action. We are children and heirs of a realm

whose only law is that of love — of love, not in the ethical or scientific definition thereof, but as the vital spring of all action.

Ethical, like physical, science reaches only a generalisation, a formula expressed in terms of the understanding, and so limited as to exclude any element of spiritual significance. Conscience itself is such a term. It is used mainly as indicating the power of distinction between right and wrong, of moral judgment; but it would seem to be something more than this, in that it is a power native to man and spontaneous in its action; therefore a larger generalisation is made, and it is called a moral instinct. Beyond this science cannot go, for here it confronts life. It is admitted that it is a power which — like all others — may be perverted, which may accommodate itself to a system of purely arbitrary and conventional regulations. But it has its surprises — there is in it something which transcends any ethical system, and which cannot be ethically defined — something rooted in man's spiritual nature, though its judgments are not necessarily of a spiritual character, as "right" and "wrong" are not terms of spiritual significance.

They who would have Christianity appear to be only the perfection of the worldly scheme naturally choose to regard our Lord's teachings as pre-eminently ethical. But he clearly avoids the use of all ethical terms — never speaking of conscience or duty — and to translate his discourses into such terms, if it were possible to do so, would be an utter eclipse of their heavenly light.

He who is born again liveth and moveth and hath his being in Love, which is the vital principle of the kingdom. With all His purposes concerning us, even in our temporal relations, God hath associated what we in these relations call love, so that it is by this bond that we are drawn

instead of being driven by the compulsion of an outward force or of an arbitrary commandment. The very continuance of human existence upon the earth is an illustration of this association — so that parental love is a natural image of the love of our heavenly Father, and the most beautiful and exalting of human relations is the basis of the similitude wherein our Lord is represented as the Bridegroom.

Love is, in like manner, associated in us with God's eternal purposes concerning us as the heirs of an endless life. And the reflex of our heavenly love is its sensibility — the light of the soul by which it discerns spiritual truth — the truth which is of Love. As the mother has no thought of duty or of obligation or of right in what she does for her child, but is moved solely by her love, so the regenerate, in doing the Father's will, regard not these outward bonds or any ethical obligations — these being extinguished in the truth of Love which makes us free. In the kingdom we find, instead of the ethical conscience distinguishing between right and wrong, the regenerate conscience that distinguishes between the loving and the unloving action.

All lesser bonds are loosened in that by which we are united unto our Lord. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." When told that his mother and his brethren stand without desiring to speak with him, he asked: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" adding, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

XXXVIII

THE worldly estate is Captivity — that of the Kingdom is Release. The Christian Sabbath, fixed upon the first instead of the seventh day of the week, so as to dissociate it from the Jewish Sabbath, is the Lord's day — no longer commemorating God's rest from toil, since He ever worketh and without weariness, and our Lord continues His work. Often did Jesus rebuke the over-religious Jews because of their formal and ceremonious observance of their Sabbath. It was natural that they, who themselves added continually to men's burdens, should make the Sabbath a day of bondage.

The Gospel of Release.

There is in all men who exclude the divine life the tendency toward a mechanical system of religion, making their faith as unvital as their worldly operation. Having shut God out of their hearts, they make a God after their own lifeless plan, placing Him in the centre of a mechanical universe, and conceiving of Him as an arbitrary Lawgiver and Judge; who hath wrath, tempered by mercy; who hath knowledge and memory, as man hath, taking conscious note of every act and holding it forever in remembrance; who standeth somehow outside of his world of Nature and humanity, abandoning it, in part, and for a given season, to His equally arbitrary Adversary; who holdeth sacred special times and places, and who requireth the service of men in connection with such times and places — a service of solemn feasts and offerings; who regulateth His administration according to the desires of His court-favorites, expressed in formal supplications; and who suspendeth His judgment for some final day of wrath.

Now it was our Lord's mission to deliver man from this system. The utterances of divinely inspired prophets had rebuked it, and had exhausted the resources of human speech to show that God was love and that He sought love and not sacrifice.

Our Lord's heresy was especially manifest in his treatment of the Jewish Sabbath. He particularly selected that day for his works of healing, in order that he might set upon it the impress of man's deliverance instead of his bondage. He declared that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

His followers, in choosing for their Sabbath the day of his resurrection, gave it its most joyous meaning, thus associating it with man's release from the power of death.

In every way our Lord's Gospel is that of Release — release from weariness, from care, from all solicitudes, from all questionings, from conflict, from all the maxims and traditions and commandments of men, from all outward authority, from the lien upon the soul of material possessions, from the strife of ambition, from the bonds of sin and from the power of death.

This Gospel reverses all the conceptions of a mechanical religion. It teaches the divine service of humanity rather than the human service of God. He who showeth the Father unto us saith, "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister." God needeth not our service, but He calleth us to co-operation with Him in this service of humanity. "I have not called you servants but friends." The true Master of all is the servant of all.

XXXIX

THE freedom of the Kingdom, like that of Nature, while it is a liberation from all arbitrary or conventional regulation from without, is not released from law. Love is Law as well as Liberty. It has its own bond—the closest of all, the most real of all—that of life unto life. If spiritual operation is spontaneous and self-moved, it is also self-restrained; it is bound back to its central source. Until we live the life, we know not its law, which, like the laws of Nature, evades all mental analysis.

Nature of Spiritual Law.

We speak of a natural law as if we comprehended it, because we have discovered some mathematical feature thereof. What knowledge have we of the attraction which we call Gravitation? We can measure its velocity and the variation thereof according to distance. But this restraint of motion, which is as vital as motion itself—what knowledge of it have we? All but its mathematics escapes our analysis. It is the bond of unity and harmony in the universe. It is to-day what it was when the morning stars sang together. It is indeed the tonality of that song still continued. And it is in musical tonality, with its accord and inward obligation, that we have the nearest symbol of natural or spiritual harmony.

This harmony is not the result of education, training, discipline. That which is the result of these is only a simulation of the harmony.

The spiritual life has system — the organisation of its attractions—the vital series distributing and at the same time illustrating the harmony. The kingdom has its mirror in all the apparent contradictions that constitute the harmony of what we call the material world—in its

attractions and repulsions, its restraints and accelerations, its contractions and expansions, its waiting and following, its hungers and satisfactions, its equilibrium and disturbance, its takings and leavings, its losings and findings, and its movements of flight and return.

The spiritual life has the discipline of discipleship — of following, of patience, of entire submission to the mastery of the divine life, a mastery which is ministration.

The children alone are free. The outward law, like justice, belongs only to that perverted life which has lost the divine likeness, and it cannot be given up, without the confusion of anarchy, except as this worldly perversion is given up for the new life of the kingdom.

XL

THE kingdom of heaven, the union of man's will with God's will in perfect love, is not revealed by our Lord as a kingdom having relation to time — *i. e.*, to time as past, present and future: it is eternal, and its life is eternal life. It is not to be thought of as distinctively the Future Life.

Our Earthly Life not a Probation.

The "World to Come" is that which is to displace the world that is. It does not matter *when* we are, or *where:* our vital concern, as children of the kingdom, is not with portions or parcels of what we call space and time, but with their wholeness, as God regardeth them — with the Eternal.

The kingdom hath a forward look as related to our hope, our expectation, and not to ours alone but to the hope and expectation of the entire creation. It is "to come." It is not postponed to some other world. Our earthly existence is not an experiment. The worldly scheme of life is an experiment, and is on trial; but we

cannot so regard Nature or God's purpose respecting humanity. Perverted human nature — antagonising that purpose, and in like manner antagonising all Nature outside the scope of its perversion — is indeed a by-play. It is an attempt to live without God in the world. It is a house built on the sand, and cannot endure, since it defies both God and Nature. It is to be displaced by the life of the kingdom, which is to come "on earth as it is in heaven." It is, therefore, worldliness alone, not our earthly existence, which is on probation; it is this only which can come to judgment, and it is being judged at every stage of its development, condemned by its own hollowness, tested by the spirit of love as revealed in the new life of the kingdom, weighed in the balances and found wanting. It is a blasphemy to say of aught which God hath ordained that it is the mere scaffolding of His House of Life. He buildeth not that way.

Unto the Buddhist all conscious existence is an evil. He seeks not the way of life but the way out of life, into the Nirwana. But Buddhism is not Christianity. Our Lord, at one with God, at one with Nature, betrayeth nor denieth either, but maketh us, in so far as we conform unto his image, at one with both. This is the consummation of our deliverance, the largest meaning of his incarnation — his full atonement.

XLI

Eternal Life.

But they tempt him — these Sadducees, who believe not in the Resurrection — with a problem. The woman who had seven husbands, whose wife shall she be in the Resurrection?

Our Lord was in several instances tempted in this manner for his entanglement, and he made each

case an occasion for some new unfolding of the kingdom. We have seen how it was when they brought unto him the sinful woman — how the love in him became in their hearts a sword, while unto hers it became grace and hope. So, when a problem of this world's political economy was presented to him in the question of tribute. He had already taught his disciples that as children they were released from this obligation, yet had set them the example of submission. But now that the question is put for his confusion, he saith nothing of this freedom. He asks for a penny, draws attention to Cæsar's image and superscription thereon, and saith, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's." He says, in effect: "It is not a vital matter — this tribute; it concerns not the life of the kingdom; but it is vital that ye yield unto the claims of this life — that ye render unto God the things which are His."

But this problem propounded by the Sadducees is not a question of the Mosaic law or of political economy; it touches the Future Life and man's confused speculations respecting it. The question, as put, however, has no spiritual meaning, but regards the claims of marriage, which, even under human law, are annulled by death. Our Lord, in reply, says nothing of this legal limitation. In the divine scheme it is life not death which looseth. He shows that in the kingdom there can be no such problem; in its life there is no marrying or giving in marriage — that is a relation which concerns us not as the heirs of an eternal life. Moreover, as children of the kingdom death itself concerns us not. God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him. Though in the physical sense we die every moment, yet He taketh account of life only. The Resurrection itself illustrates the nothingness of death.

Just as our Lord hath said, "Whoso eateth of the bread of life shall not hunger any more," meaning that, though he may have physical hunger, yet spiritually he hath unfailing sustenance, so now he saith that the children of the kingdom have everlasting life: birth, marriage, death, in the physical sense, whatever they may mean in connection with God's special purposes concerning us in time, do not pertain to His eternal purposes respecting us.

XLII

Christ gives us no Definite Indications of the Future Life.

It is not necessary to so limit our Lord's meaning as to conceive that he is here speaking especially of what we call the Future Life. He has regard to the spirit of man which liveth forever, and to the life which they have that are born of the Spirit and that are partakers of his resurrection. Some of those to whom he is speaking have been born again; yet are they subject to physical death, which even he is to suffer who is the Lord of the heavenly kingdom. Because, upon another occasion, he said, "There be some among you that shall not see death," many, willing, like the Sadducees, to put him in the wrong, have insisted that he was predicting the end of the world as to come within that generation. Possibly some such construction may have been put upon his words by his disciples — though that is by no means proven — but it is clear that he, whenever he speaks of everlasting life, means the life of the kingdom, the spiritual life.

He gives us no speculations respecting a future life. Aside from his resurrection, he hath not lifted the veil. Immortality is brought to light, but we know not what we shall be — only that we shall be like unto him. There is nothing in what he hath revealed unto us which either

affirms or denies the continuance of Nature or our continued participation in her procession of generations—nothing which affirms or denies the dreams of our poets and the speculations of our sages to the effect that in such a participation

> "We have ever been
> And evermore shall be."

If we know not what we shall be, neither do we know what Nature shall be, in her on-going from strength unto strength. There is no antagonism between the Natural and the Spiritual. Humanity has been bound up with Nature from the beginning, and, through the Incarnation, this bond has become a sacrament. If we are to suppose that any change has passed upon what we call the material world, in consequence of or in sympathy with man's errors, it has not, as we have seen, been such as to affect the correspondence of its meanings, spiritually interpreted, with those of the kingdom of heaven, as revealed by our Lord; and, if there has been any change due to the perversion of human life, then may we expect that Nature will in like manner respond unto the renewals of our life.

XLIII

WHENCE this contempt of Nature, that we should expect divorcement from her? Is she not the embodiment of the Eternal Word?

The Kingdom not opposed to Nature.

St. Paul, in his distinction between the Natural and the Spiritual, does not by the term Natural mean that which pertains to this divine manifestation, but that which pertains to man's corrupt and perverse nature. By the "natural man" and the "natural body," he means man's corrupt nature and corrupt carnal manifestation of that nature. He has no con-

tempt for flesh and blood, else he would not speak of the human body as the temple of God.

Our Lord never opposes the kingdom to Nature but to "this world"—that is, to the whole scheme of man's perverted and unnatural life. Instead of divorcing us from Nature, it is a part of his redemption that he restores Nature unto us. And unto her are we reconciled, as unto God. When this reconciliation is complete, all strife will cease, even God's loving strife and saving anger in us, lost in divine satisfaction and peace and joy. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God.

XLIV

We are reconciled to all of Nature. We say not, "And there shall be no more Sea."

The Lesson of the Sea.

For the Sea is no longer haunted by the dread phantoms of our fear. This watery element, which is the greater part of our fleshly substance, as it is also the greater part of the earth, the symbol of dissolution, being the greatest solvent in Nature, and therefore the Way of Death in scientific as well as mythological association, is also the Way of Life, since it not only undermineth the hard and beareth away the old, but buildeth up the new; is the symbol of flowing freedom,—of loosening strength,—of cleansing,—of ready responsiveness unto heavenly drawings and unto all the calls of life,—of marvellous transformations from earthly to heavenly shapes and, also, of the return from the heavenly to the earthly—in the gracious dew, in refreshing showers, through streams that gladden the earth and again find their way unto the mighty deep,—the symbol also of safety in its very openness, away from the perils of solid reefs, and of a strength which, in all its buffetings, still

beareth us up, so that, even in its storms, it is more faithful than is the solid land when convulsed and shaken under our feet.

XLV

And we say not, "There shall be no more Night."

The Divine Ordinance of Darkness.

For it is even He who hath awakened and quickened us who also giveth us sleep — not only the rest for weariness, but the release from the tension of wakefulness itself. Even that which is incidental to imperfect sleep (because our waking life is not wholly full and round) — the Dream — is in a vague and shadowy way significant of a freedom of movement which defieth all limitations of space and time. But, though we wearied not, nor slept, nor had the freedom of the dream, but were to wake and watch, still hath the Night a release from the confinement of the near sunlight, which veileth the immensities of space. If Day unto Day uttereth speech, Night unto Night showeth knowledge.

Listen to the lesson of the Stars:

"We are First and Last — it is thou, O Son of Man, made in the image of God, who art Last and First.

"We show unto thine eyes, that are opened by the darkness, the vast cycles of Space and Time.

"The light from the remotest of us showeth thee that star, not as it is now, but as it was before thy race was born upon the earth. Thus is the Ancient of Days present unto thee, with his very glance of untold ages gone. So, unto this remotest of us, thou art visible, not now, but untold ages hence. If, having lived thy threescore years and ten upon the earth, thou shouldst be borne unto the nearest of us, and couldst therefrom see by the light from the earth all that goeth on upon its surface, thou wouldst

behold thyself as an infant, and couldst follow step by step all thine earthly pilgrimage, so that what thou callest thy past would appear unto thee as present and future; and thou wouldst seem endowed with a wondrous gift of prophecy, since, from thy memory of thy past, thou couldst predict what is to come.

"Behold what thou callest Past, Present, and Future, is only relative. In the light of the All-seeing One they do not exist. So that, while we seem unto thee, in thy fixed place, the measure of times and seasons and of the vastness of space, yet, could we give thee the freedom of all our realm, thou wouldst see that Space and Time are but the forms of thine own thought. In thought thou knowest only the Divisible. The spiritual knowledge is of indivisible Unity. The Now of the Mind hath one part past and one part to come, so that there is no present. Unto the Spirit there is only endless Becoming."

XLVI

Nor do we say, "There shall be no more Death." For Death, of which night is the image, is the mightiest of revelations.

The Divine Ordinance of Death.

In itself nothing, Death is yet the open door unto Life. Our newness of life every moment is possible only through the death that is in every moment. This is a truth confirmed by Science, in her faithful testimony to Nature's law. But when the last moment cometh, and Death claimeth all that is sensibly visible—here Science is dumb. Unto her a door is closed; but unto the spiritual vision a door is opened, even as the stone is removed from the tomb of our Lord. It is because of the completeness of Death's claim that entire Newness of Life is possible.

Life, without Death, would be, like an endless day, a prison-house of the soul. Life, without Death, would itself become the very similitude of Death — of Death that bindeth instead of releasing. It would be as if the sun stood forever fixed at noon in the brazen zenith — forever preventing the larger illumination of his setting. Death is in Nature but the shadow of its constantly renewed birth; yet — nay, for this very reason — is this shadow the inspiration of life. Life, as an eternally fixed present, would *be* Death; it is only through the gracious ordinance of Nature which we name Death that Life hath its onward movement — that it *is* Life. It is the losing of life which saveth it; and this losing is through the passing, the dying.

So vital in all her ordinances is Nature that even her mortality hath the semblance of life, so that we associate therewith the freedom and release which are characteristic of the quickening Spirit. It is when we stay the process of dissolution, when we arrest the backward movement of the shuttle, that life becometh stagnation and its whole web rotten. Arrested death is arrested life; and it is such life, rather than quick death itself, which is the true symbol of spiritual death.

And we welcome death, not because of the sorrow and burden of life, but because of its joy; not because of our pessimism or despair, but because of our faith. We behold not an inverted torch, but the torch burned to ashes — thus fully proving the effectiveness of the flame, which itself ever liveth, forever consuming the old, the hard and the dry, that there may be place for the young and green and tender. We pray for the completeness of dissolution — nay, like Achilles by the burning pyre of Patroclus, even for its haste — as the winter cometh with its frosts and violent winds to precipitate the processes of decay.

that the spring-time may not be delayed in her coming, nor lose aught of her freshness and verdure. And we thus love Death, only that Life may be all in all.

XLVII

THUS are we reconciled unto Nature — even unto her cold, her darkness, her death, seeing that through these, as through the quickness of life, the mortal putteth on immortality.

The Complete Reconciliation.

Nature is ever the counterpart of our Lord. The temporal hath no strife with the eternal. Like the union of soul and body is the union of the heavenly with the earthly, of the endless life of the kingdom with our mortal life. It is only as our Lord reviveth in our hearts the spiritual meanings of Nature and of the Kingdom that we have the full revelation of the Father; and, abiding in him, as he abideth in the Father, we have, even in this earthly existence, everlasting life, being associated with him in co-operation with the eternal purposes of an infinite Love. Even while we inherit time we are the heirs of eternity. Living, we live in Him who is our life; and dying, we yet live in him. The greatest of all beatitudes is this: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

XLVIII

ASK ye, Beloved, why, in contemplating our reconciliation with Nature, we especially dwell upon those of her aspects which have, throughout the cycle of human error, been associated with terror and dismay? How could be so clearly shown the deliverance of perfect love as in this — that its hope selects the very places of fear for its safe habitation? It is

The Earthly Reprisal.

not that we love darkness rather than light, or death rather than life, but because the one discloseth the heavenly firmament full of light, and the other unveileth immortality.

Though the glory of the setting sun holds in promise so vast an illumination, yet we despise not the glory of the dawn, albeit that it maketh shallow our heaven. The stars are distant and cold, and that we are not to give them that long and full regard which we give to the near sunlight is indicated, in that it is while they shine that men sleep. While death is an invitation to life, being the open gate thereof, yet it is life itself which hath the intimate and direct hold upon us here and now. The days of Summer are the longest days.

We are the children of the Resurrection, and the dearness of the earth in all its warm and joyous life under the sun is the greater when we remember that our Lord returned thereto from the tomb, and was again known unto his disciples in the breaking of bread. The Sun, for whose coming we ever look, is his true symbol, for his Appearings are from everlasting to everlasting.

It is Newness of Life that we seek, and this we have always, having his life in us—the Vine which, after innumerable vintages, still blossometh in all its branches. It is he who is our spring-time, with his baptism of flame quickening the tender buds and consuming all the dead wood.

He came eating and drinking, and those who were with him fasted not, because of the presence of the joyous Bridegroom. He was no ascetic, but the giver of a more abundant life, restoring unto men in their heavenly purity all earthly delights.

If release is characteristic of the kingdom, so is return. Therein nothing halteth; there is no purgatorial chasm between life and life, only the quick death; no door of the

Father's many mansions is ever shut. That which is taken is that which remaineth; even as in sleep we let go the visible only to wake thereunto and clasp it afresh. We wake and sleep, not knowing which is better, and so we know not whether it is better to go or to return; we only know that it is the way of Life.

In the kingdom of heaven there are paradoxes, but no contradictions. It hath prodigality of life, careless abundance, yet in its waste no want. It hath also prodigality of death, yet is the movement of life not stayed. Day swalloweth up Night and the Night the Day, yet the glory of the one contradicteth not nor annulleth the glory of the other. Mastery is service and freedom bondage, and loss is gain. The harmony is complete in all these antiphonies — of the Eternal and Temporal, of the Heavenly and the Earthly.

XLIX

He hath visited us. As an outward, historical phenomenon, the Incarnation hath a brief period, yet is it sufficient for its divine purpose. What had been hidden was revealed in him, and what he hath revealed can never more be hidden. Symbolism.

What mighty meaning is there for us in this Incarnation, a meaning commemorated by us forever in a blessed sacrament! And yet, even as the heavenly manna in the wilderness, lest it should be hoarded as an earthly thing, was quickly destroyed, so is his body taken wholly away from before our eyes, lest we forget that it is the Spirit that quickeneth, and that the flesh profiteth not.

The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. In all symbolism, the sign is at once everything and nothing — everything because in itself it is nothing. If we stay our feet

upon the thing, if we rest in the sign, regarding it as something in itself, it becometh the body of death, and, clinging thereunto, we are held fast as in a tomb. It should be to us but the stepping-stone, from which we leap unto the heavenly meaning.

The word as a means of communication should be swift as the lightning — from life unto life. But, if we lean upon the literal word, we falter and are betrayed; death entereth.

So, also, with the means of life. Any material thing, clung unto as a possession, corrupteth the soul. With all things must we deal quickly, while we are in the way with them, else, instead of helps, they become our adversaries, which, loitered with, cast us into prison. To give thought unto meat and drink is a loitering unto death; in bodily heaviness the lightness of the spirit is lost. Our deeds are "stepping-stones on which we rise to higher things"; but the best deed hindereth, if looked back upon. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

All revelation is quick as life; the veil, if it fall not at once, becometh a shroud. The Mount of Transfiguration is not a place where we can safely say, "Let us stay here and build tabernacles."

And the incarnate Word, our Lord, he is indeed the very way of our climbing. Yet if we look for him in the flesh, he is not here — he hath arisen. He hath ascended into heaven, that where he is there we may be also.

It is not that we seek translation, as from one place unto another. All places are alike in His realm, and He is alike in every part thereof. No change that can come to us, not even death, signifieth such translation. The kingdom of heaven is within us. We are not transplanted into it; it is planted in us.

The great change is regeneration, by which our earthly

life is rooted not in the worldly but in the heavenly — that is in God Himself, in whom we live and move and have our being.

L

Our Christian life is, then, at once a heavenly enfolding, and an earthly unfolding, according to the heavenly type — the image of the Son. We constantly awake in his likeness. He is not with us in the body, but his spirit he hath left with us, to lead us into all truth — to take the things of Christ and show them unto us.

The Heavenly Enfolding and the Earthly Unfolding.

The Word become flesh was not the revelation of any truth new in itself, but of what had been the divine disposition from the beginning. Our Lord introduced not a new divine but a new human dispensation. And the spirit which he leaveth with us, this also was with all men from the beginning, but they knew it not; only now this spirit hath the Christ to show unto us, even as the Christ hath shown us the Father.

It is the spirit not of truth only but of love. Though it judgeth not, yet judgment cometh through its presence and operation; it convinceth of sin, as light convinceth of shadow. It quickeneth unto life everlasting, and we know no more of any limitation to its blessed work than of the way thereof. It is ineffable peace, but it is also fire and the sword — the cause of mighty agitations, divisions, disturbances and upheavals. Ever again will it shake the earth with healthful commotion, when its children have settled themselves down in worldly ease and complacency. It is the Comforter, but the destroyer of all worldly comfort. It is the quickening spirit of all life, which, unto the eye of sense, is forever bringing all to nought; and unto it

the entire visible universe is but as a garment, which, at the end of cycles, that unto it are but as days, it foldeth up, and again unfoldeth unto newness of life.

END OF SECOND BOOK.

THIRD BOOK

THE DIVINE HUMAN FELLOWSHIP

THE DIVINE HUMAN FELLOWSHIP

I

O THOU divine Spirit, unto whom none can minister, but who art ministrant unto all, how else shall we do Thy will, but as we cease to be Thy servants and become Thy friends in ministration,— how else, indeed, shall we find Thee but as we love one another!

The Second Incarnation.

The incarnate manifestation of the Father, the articulate Word, hath no continuing life or meaning — hath, indeed, in itself no significance — save as it finds an embodiment in a loving human fellowship. Our Lord found no truer way of showing the divine mastery than by washing his disciples' feet. It was not a dramatic exhibition but a real explication. It was one of the divine surprises which not only bewildered the disciples, but, being so complete a reversal of all human experience, has seemed inexplicable ever since, save as it is considered an act of condescension! Even the coming of our Lord has been regarded as a divine condescension. There is no divine quality in condescension any more than we imitate the loving Father in condescending unto our brethren.

There has always been the obstinate refusal of man's self-will to take the divine life at its own meaning. Pagan faith in its sincerest attitude never spiritually comprehended the idea of human brotherhood.

The Gospel would have been arrested, becoming an abortive failure, if the spirit of love, which was its divine

inspiration, had not straightway found embodiment in a spontaneous and equal fellowship, not of saints celebrating a mystical and exclusive communion, but of poor, frail, famishing souls who broke bread from house to house, seeking to find in brotherly household correspondences the riches of divine love and wisdom.

We can know our Lord for what he really is to us only in such fellowship. That spiritual dispensation which is the further revelation of him has no operation in any other way. It is only as the leaven of the kingdom works in the great unwholesome lump of sinful humanity, sweetening it to divine uses, that any private individual blessedness is possible. No man liveth unto himself. Isolated man is denied even his own individual humanity. Dependence is the basis of development. This is true in even unregenerate society — how much more deeply true in an association which is based upon love, and which is the only really divine communion!

Our interpretation of Christianity as a development of the kingdom in the world cannot, therefore, exceed the limits of this fellowship. In so far as we find indications of this living Christian brotherhood, we shall find a new unfolding of spiritual truth even beyond that of the Gospel, though accordant therewith. No truth is revealed apart from the life which discloses it.

It is in this light that the first three Christian centuries are of absorbing interest. It would be instructive to consider associations based upon purely scientific theories — reactions against irrational worldly economies; it would be still more suggestive to follow the course of those communities, social or religious, which have had their origin in a sentiment more or less in alliance with the spirit of the early Christians — reactions against social conventions or formal ecclesiasticism. But we should find nothing in

following these lines so large or so vital as the Christian movement up to the time of Constantine.

The first Christian generation after the Ascension of our Lord is like a mountain peak piercing the heavens, testifying to the mighty force which raised it; and to its luminous height all Christendom looks back, identifying its exaltation with inspiration. All that gives it this place in our regard is the fact that it was a new, spontaneous and wholly genuine and natural embodiment of Christ — his larger incarnation in humanity, and especially in a community of unrespectable sinners, consisting largely of slaves, outcasts and suspects. Apart from such an embodiment the truths of the kingdom, even in our Lord's unfolding of them, fail of any earthly issue. Indeed, this larger incarnation of the Christ is a new unfolding of these truths in a second Gospel wholly our own, in so far as the divine life becomes our own, marred and in some respects traduced by our obstinate perverseness, but, nevertheless, a further unfolding of the kingdom. To catch some glimpses of this ultimate Gospel we would fain dwell long with the disciples at Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus and Rome, and with Paul in his independent world-wide apostolate; and, with the same purpose, we would follow the lines of Christian development through the entire Ante-Nicene period, along the ways leading to numberless martyrdoms and through the dark thoroughfares of the silent catacombs, until the new faith — whose rapid spread over the whole Roman empire is itself the revelation of its vitality — triumphs without a struggle over the final array against it of Pagan elements that vanish before it like mists before the rising sun.

After the Imperial adoption of Christianity, and during its long Roman sepulture in the Middle Ages, we shall see that there is a real Christendom under its ecclesiastical

mask — that the Christian embodiment in human fellowship still goes on, since it is God and not the church that takes care of the kingdom.

Finally, in the accelerated movements of modern times we spiritually discern only the divine quickening of the Brotherhood, while even yet this fellowship is not visible as an outward embodiment. Now, there is an awakening in the church, as in the great Wesleyan revival; and, again, when the Lord is excluded by formal ecclesiasticism or only partially accepted by a halting faith, then we behold him glorified in the movements of the world, even by those who are not called by his name. The last, the supreme lesson of Faith is that we look only to the divine life, as operating in all mankind, for the determination of its own issues; and the final issue is universal brotherhood, not from the adoption of any sociological theory, but from the radical renewal, at its very source in the human heart, of all social life.

The Spiritual life, as the realisation of the Christ-life, is not an inward regard, cherishing a private good, but an outward clasping, the showing of the mastery of the divine life in us by our ministration especially unto the least, the poorest, the most unlovely. If we have set out to find the Palace of our King, resolving that we will enter it and live with Him, even as the most abject of minions, we are not in the right way, and shall never see the Palace, nor find the King. He is serving our poor brothers in wretched hovels numberless and near at hand, and, if we will join him in this service, we shall find Him there, and every hovel will seem unto us His Palace.

II

HATH Joseph of Arimathea prepared a tomb for our Lord? Behold how quickly it is a cenotaph! The veil is entirely withdrawn. The Christ remains with us only as a Spiritual Life, no longer embodied in a single life but in humanity, and thus to even transcend the glory of his earthly life, having that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He hath shown us the Father, and to do this hath become the Brother; but now, in the Brotherhood of man, is the Father to be plainly revealed beyond what our Lord hath manifested in his life and in his parables. "In my Father's house are many mansions." These mansions of heavenly life and truth we are to enter as they are built up for us in loving fellowship one with another. Our Lord goes away, but spiritually he comes again. Wherever in such fellowship even only two or three are gathered together, he is there. The works which he hath done in the flesh are to be surpassed by the works to be done in all flesh. If he hath surprised us by his unfoldings of heavenly truth, what vaster surprises await us in the actual realisation of human Brotherhood!

A Waiting Revelation.

The individual spiritual development can only be commensurate with that of such a fellowship, thus divinely reinforced. There is no growth save as we grow into one another, fitly joined together into this wonderful temple. Even more than our Saviour's love for us doth our love for one another disclose the glories of the kingdom and the utter poverty of worldliness, for it is only thus that our Lord can really be with us as the Spirit of Love and of Truth. Such is the expansion of the new life that its vital communication is quick and far reaching as are the cur-

rents of natural forces. "For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." He shall not be found in the desert, nor in the secret chambers. It is not until the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached unto all nations that the end can be — the fulfilment. First there shall be the partial revealings, the lightening now here and now there under the heaven, and sometimes it shall seem as though there were no light, but only darkness, but finally there shall be the complete illumination; and this complete revelation can only be unto all.

It is in this associative unfolding of a vital principle that the revelation of the Father through the Son is continuous. In our Lord himself it was a gradual unfolding. We can see how, after his resurrection, his own vision expanded — his feeling of the committal unto him of all power in heaven and on earth. He knew that in his earthly existence the revelation was incomplete, save as to the essential principle of the new life — the seed whose field was the world. Only of her children could the divine wisdom be fully justified. It is a peculiarity of his teaching, as compared with that of other men, that it never for a moment, never by a single step, passed beyond the current of the life, never leaped beyond the point reached in a real progression. There was the forward look, and so the anticipation by him of his death and resurrection, as the grape ripening in the sunshine fore-feeleth the wine-press and the exaltation of its free spirit. But beyond this there was in him no knowledge. Of the coming of the Son not even the Son knoweth, but only the Father. And all the truth which he clearly saw he could not reveal unto his disciples, because they could not then bear it. He could tell them

that the world would hate them, even as it had hated him, but what a dark shadow would overwhelm them if he were to tell them (for he knew what was in man) of the hour to come, nay, the centuries, during which his gospel of love would be suppressed by those calling themselves after his name! And there was hopeful, glorious anticipation which he could not share with them now. Therefore he would, after his departure, send the Spirit, who should lead them into all truth. "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." The revelation would come in its own season, in the real situation, at the vital moment.

III

The Spiritual Unfolding.

WHAT promises! After this great manifestation of divine love and wisdom in our Lord — such as hath never before been known upon the earth — still more is to be shown us!

There is no storing up of heavenly manna. The abundant life overflows with prodigality, even as Nature wastes her fragrance and bounty.

How different is this from the conception of an unvital faith! Men are disposed to accept rules of life rather than its principles. They prize a system of penances and indulgences, as one determined to be sick stores up medical prescriptions. They would have life limited and measured out to them, and they expect through formal prayers to receive its fruits, which, in the divine method, are the results of growth only. They would substitute strenuous effort for growth, looking unto a reward rather than unto grace. They love casuistry, and dote upon virtuous economies, thinking, like Judas, of alms-giving whenever love wasteth her precious ointment. They prefer a life which

they can regulate with precision, and exact definitions of faith itself, lest in a divine confusion it should overflow their mental limitations. They nourish the belief in a God who keeps His place while they keep theirs — in a suspended judgment and a postponed heaven — jealous lest in some way the well-defined boundaries between the human and the divine, between this world and some better one, should be broken up, and the unbalanced abundance of grace should flow in and sweep away all their landmarks and nice adjustments, precipitating the millennium.

But our Lord left no chart for the guidance of life. Other teachers have left nothing else. The children of the kingdom need no chart for the regulation of the spiritual life, any more than the lilies of the field need one to show them the way unto beauty as long as the sun is in the heavens. The sun is always in the Christian's heavens. Not only is the seed sown in this garden divine, but the increase thereof also. Our Lord was not a preceptor — he was a Life. He did not formulate an ethical or theological system. He imposed no conditions, save that of the acceptance of this life, upon his followers. When he said unto the young man, "If thou wouldst be perfect, go and sell all thou hast and give unto the poor and come and follow me," he was not enjoining poverty or almsgiving, but the following, and this even was not a condition, since one who performed miracles in his name, and yet was not one of the group of his disciples, was counted as with him; only he that gathereth not with us scattereth abroad. The Spirit that quickens determines also the issues of life.

After our Lord's departure, faith in him was still the same — the complete surrender of man's will unto God's will, and co-operation therewith. Man was not left alone to regulate his life in accordance with any outward sys-

tem. "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

IV

The Galilean Community.

While he was with his disciples, our Lord had made his abode with them, and they were as one household. They had left all to follow him. There were others who, like Mary and Martha and Lazarus, of Bethany, while retaining separate households, fully accepted him as one sent from the Father. There was no attempt on his part to establish an order. His disciples were not yet called Christians; the name was not known in his lifetime, nor for many years afterward. They were all workmen, and he was often with them as they wrought. They were united as brethren, but so little stress is laid upon their communism that we should not know — but for an incident related in the story of the Last Supper — that they had a common purse. Their wants were simple, and no special value was attached to material possessions; moreover, the hospitality of many homes,— like that at Bethany,— was freely extended to the little company. How frequently we have a glimpse of Jesus as a guest of those outside of the closely-united group, even at the houses of publicans and sinners; it was on one of these occasions that the woman came in and anointed his feet.

The disciples were so much occupied with the spiritual truth unfolded to them by the Master that they gave no thought to outward forms. This community in no way resembled such an organisation as that known to us as the church. He was indeed establishing a new society upon the basis of a new life, which would have its own embodi-

ment. It was because he had perfect faith in the divine life that he could leave its embodiment to take care of itself. For the same reason that he left no system of ethical teaching for the regulation of the outward life, he also showed no solicitude respecting the future outward expression of faith in creed or ritual. What to the iconoclastic reformer is first was the last to him. The life in him was a transforming life; he was always turning water into wine — better wine than had been drunken. He always made it clear that old bottles could not hold the new wine. But what was old had once been new. The truths which he revealed had been hidden from the foundation of the world, but they were as new in their hiding-place as they were in his unfolding. Thus in the store-house of the kingdom were treasures both old and new. Old things would pass away, but not until they were fulfilled — until the newness in them reappeared in the heavenly transformation.

Nowhere are the divine love and wisdom in our Lord more clearly manifest than in his treatment of the Jewish faith — love, in that he leaned unto the old, with the yearning he had unto prophet-killing Jerusalem; wisdom, in that, while he knew that every plant which the Father had not planted should be rooted up, he also knew that the new and tender plant must first be born and grow before it could displace the old. He never touches the law but he brings back its inward newness, as love, and in doing this he is wont to use the very phrases of the Prophets. How dear to him is the free and simple worship of the synagogue! While he denounces Pharisaism, and prefers love to sacrifice, yet how diligently he prepares the Passover, making it his last supper with his disciples. The feast — brought back to its original meaning as a sacrament rather than a sacrifice, before ever

there was the law or the priesthood — is celebrated in the usual way. They recline about the table, the cup of wine is passed around, and the bread, and the hymn is sung (the last part of the *Hallel*); and while these old features are preserved, the new and forward-looking significance of the supper is developed without violence to any former association. Almost insensibly the new leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Truly the kingdom cometh without observation. Our Lord doth not say unto his disciples, "Come, let us build a new structure, leaving the old, then shall we see a new life"; but he saith, "Love is the fulfilling of its divine germ in this old body of faith, which hath become decrepid in wearily treading the hard paths of sacrifice and formal righteousness. Lay not violent hands from without upon this decrepitude, accomplishing no more than if ye whiten the sepulchre. In this very tomb let the seed be planted. Out of new hearts love shall grow, in the shadow of these ruins, its fresh tendrils clinging thereunto with the strength of softness, first covering them with its beauty, embracing them with all its joyous might — awful as the dawn — and finally bearing them gently down, if they yield, or, if they resist, dissolving them in its subduing flame."

It was on Sabbath days in the synagogue, and in the great annual feasts at Jerusalem, that our Lord, in the brief period of his public ministry, found regular opportunities for preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. But the irregular opportunities were perhaps more favorable — such as were spontaneous, and incidental to his immediate association with the multitude that followed him because of their need, and in whose hearts there was a direct response to his gracious authority. The circumstances of his life in the country brought him into contact with the common people, who heard him gladly; and his

discourses, like the Sermon on the Mount, were delivered in the presence of that Nature which so readily lent herself to the happiest illustration, becoming the very body to his divine thought, and whose peace was the fit emblem of the peace he gave unto men.

How beautiful, as they are presented in the simple narrative of the Gospels, are the pictures of his pastoral relations to great multitudes and to his little flock! And what a contrast to the glimpses we have of his life in Jerusalem, where the priests and the Pharisees are dominant, seeking to destroy him, but they fear the multitude who look upon him as a prophet. Here he is brought into contact with the worldly system, entrenched in the very strongholds of Jewish ecclesiasticism. It is from this centre that proceed nearly all the elements of denunciation and strife that trouble the peaceful current of the Gospel. Out of the country follow the multitudes that exalt our Lord and strew palms in his path and, with the children, sing Hosannas along the way from the Mount of Olives and into the Temple. Out of the holy city, that other procession along the way of the Cross unto Golgotha!

And as the world persecuted him so would it persecute his disciples. Therefore the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, was to be given them.

V

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

Now, it is not to be understood that the divine Spirit has seasons of presence and withdrawal. It is the source of all life, and ever strives with man's self-will to bring it out of the worldly discord into the heavenly harmony. But, from our attitude toward this Spirit, its presence has

diverse meanings. Not received by us, it is not present in any vital sense; there are no "fruits of the Spirit." While our Lord was with his disciples, the Spirit was also present with them; to receive him was to receive the Spirit also, which dwelt in him.

The Paraclete Promised.

But his personal incarnate presence, in its very nearness to sensible vision, in its strength and fulness, held in abeyance the vaster spiritual vision, even as the sun when it shines upon us hides the immeasurable fields of light. We have seen that this was one of the limitations of the Incarnation — one which our Lord himself recognized; and we find here a special recognition thereof.

While this strong presence was with them, the disciples referred everything to him; their attempts to heal the infirmities of others were sometimes ineffectual; they were indisposed to take the initiative in action or in speech — and it is a special office of the quickening Spirit to impart this initiative impulse. Peter, afterward so brave, and destined to confront the most cruel martyrdom, yet thrice denied his present Lord; and all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled when he was seized by the chief priests and elders.

After his resurrection, when he so readily appeared and disappeared, during the forty days before he was finally parted from them, the disciples received a larger spiritual impression from his words. "Did not our hearts burn within us, as he talked with us by the way?" Already the limitation of his personal presence was to some extent removed — so that he breathed upon them, and they received the Spirit. Now for the first time his own brethren in the flesh — death having broken this tie of kinship — were able to receive him as their Elder Brother in the Spirit.

When he had ascended into heaven, his disciples had the heavenly vision of him. All the fields of heaven were

then illumined for them. Our Lord always used the phrase "in heaven" to indicate not place but a spiritual relation. And this ascension into heaven is his uplifting into the field of spiritual vision, just as his second coming is not as a babe born a second time upon the earth, but a coming "in the heavens" — the spiritual consummation of the kingdom.

VI

AFTER the Ascension, the development of the Christian life, left wholly to the children of the kingdom, is also wholly the work of the Spirit in them.

The Testament of Christian Prophecy.

The children receive the Spirit — all alike, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, for God is no respecter of persons. It is the spirit of freedom, and no one, in receiving it, receives any pre-eminence in authority, either in matters of faith or in temporal powers or privileges, over his brethren. The bonds of the Spirit are those by which each becomes the servant of all.

If our Lord made the removal of his own personal presence the basis of the largest spiritual development, then clearly it is not by the acceptance of any other person, as standing in his place, as his vicegerent in earthly relations, that such a development can be perfected.

There was no communication of life unto the immediate disciples of our Lord which is not unto all his followers. It is a spiritual communication — not through the laying on of hands. Every one receiving the Spirit is sent, even as Christ was sent.

Every one receiving the Spirit is inspired, and becomes a prophet of the living God. With our Lord's ascension the Testament of the Evangelists was closed, and a new

Testament was opened — that of Christian Prophecy or Interpretation. We speak not of written but of living testaments. And this new testament of Prophecy remains open unto the end of the world. There may be periods of silence — lasting, possibly, for thousands of years — but these, like intervals of sleep, do not break the continuity of the spiritual life, which is the unbroken current of the divine life in human operation, not manifest officially or within ecclesiastical limitations, but vitally in every one of the sons of God.

VII

The Test of the Spirit.

The work of the Spirit in us is both in our life and in our communication; and, in either case, our Lord shows whereby he may be tested. "He shall not speak of himself." There is but one source of divine life and truth — that is God. As our Lord utters our human speech, so the Spirit moves to a like utterance, through an individual voice; and, before we can accept the communication, we must plainly see that it is from the Father, and this we know through its correspondence unto the divine manifestation in Nature.

As our Lord's utterances were not only in harmony with natural truth, but were also an expansion of that harmony, so that it included the divinity of humanity, as one with the Father, having been reconciled unto Him, there is therefore this further test of all spiritual communication — that it shall take its place as part of this great harmony. It must show unto us the things of Christ, bring his words to remembrance, and, moreover, be a further revelation of the kingdom which he unfolded.

Our Lord, knowing what was in man, saw that there would be false communications, claiming to be inspired —

false authorities, claiming to be infallible. How clearly his words forecast these departures from the living truth. He saith unto his disciples: "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. . . . And then if any man shall say unto you, 'Lo, here is Christ'; or 'Lo, he is there'; believe him not. . . . For there will arise false Christs and false prophets, and will show great signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the very elect, and will deceive many."

VIII

The Departed Christ a Reinforcement of the Spirit.

How strong was our Lord's impression that by leaving his disciples he was to bring them spiritually nearer not only unto himself but unto each other! At his birth the angels are drawn from heaven to sing congratulations unto the earth because of the glory it had received. At his going, being uplifted, he drew all men to him. If this glory had not been shown upon the earth, neither would we have known it as a heavenly glory; but having seen it in the flesh, we know that when it passes from us it becomes a reinforcement of all heavenly powers that draw us.

Therefore it is that henceforth unto his disciples there is an accession of the spiritual life. The Spirit speaks unto them in the voice of the Bridegroom.

Now, being drawn nearer unto each other, they more fully understand the new commandment that they love one another even as he hath loved them. Returning unto Jerusalem, the eleven enter into an upper room, where they abide together. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

IX

In the history of the world there is no chapter so impressive as the brief record left us of this little Galilean community at Jerusalem.

The Pentecost.

What retrospection was theirs who were here gathered together during those quiet days, the last week of the interval between the two great feasts, the lull preceding the whirlwind of their enthusiasm! Their Lord had been taken from them, but now only was he present! To the mother, the brethren, and the disciples, how many situations are recalled that are now for the first time real—how many words, dimly understood as they fell upon their ears, but now filled with a meaning as broad as the heaven into which he had been taken from their steadfast gaze! The familiar scenes by the Sea of Galilee under the Syrian sky; those later scenes of tumult in the city, of the agony in Gethsemane while they slept, of the multitude coming with swords and staves and torches and lanterns, unto which he was betrayed by one who had been numbered with themselves; the terrible crucifixion; his appearings unto them after his resurrection, were now all gathered together into one sublime glory of infinite peace and passion—a glory which, in its spiritual meaning, transcending all ordinary personal associations, could only be revealed after that it had passed. Now, as never before, could they comprehend that this gracious visitation was not for them alone but for all men. Now understood they what he meant when he said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

The love which had been born in their hearts had now its spiritual expansion, impelling them not only toward

community as brethren but toward the largest communication of the life which they had received.

The first fruit of the Spirit was their "one accord." "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." It was the first Christian Assembly.

Here again it is significant that this assembling together should have been upon the oldest festival day of the Jews. This feast of first fruits, in its primitive form, belonged to an age of which there is no record—the pagan prelude to what we know of Jewish history. To the agricultural people of that remote period it was what the Eleusinia was to the ancient people of Attica. It was, like the Passover, a joyous festival—one of thanksgiving, at the opening of the harvest, to Him who "maketh peace in thy borders, who filleth thee with the finest of the wheat." It had been from the beginning the day of the assembling of the first-born.

It was, indeed, the day of first fruits—the first fruits of the Spirit. These followers of the Lord, numbering about one hundred and twenty, waiting in Jerusalem, as they had been bidden, brooding in their hearts over all they had seen and heard, were now spontaneously, with one accord, gathered together. They had no plan, no system of belief or of operation; no outward bond drew them together; but they were aflame with the Spirit, and the flame could not be hidden—it must bear witness. Never before nor since was there such a fusion of flaming souls, sustained and exalted by the inspiration of divine love and truth. This spectacle is the clearest glimpse ever had upon earth of the meaning of human accord, one with the divine harmony. These are the children—the new born of the kingdom—in an important sense the first born. Is it wonderful that they seem to hear a sound from

heaven as of the rushing of a mighty wind, filling all the place? They do not speak, but they sing psalms, and prophesy. And vast numbers of the devout of every nation then in Jerusalem are found by this strong current, caught in a living way, drawn into this whirlwind of flame — into the repose of this raging calm. For there is no confusion in the strain of this exaltation, but complete accord — the self-restrained harmony of the kingdom. These are witnesses to the love of the Father as shown in Christ; and to an endless life. Their uppermost theme is the resurrection of their Lord.

Such was the beginning of a new Society — in the very heart of Jewry, which had made a Passover that it knew not of, and a Pentecost whose joy it comprehended not.

X

HERE was a revelation, for the first time, of the possibilities of Association — an association at once divine and human. The New Society was identified with Christ, taking his place visibly as the expression of his power over all flesh, the leaven of the kingdom. In it as in him dwelt the Father (which is the same as to say the Eternal Son or the Holy Spirit); it was to continue and complete his revelation — in its development what he had revealed as the principle of the spiritual life was to be fully unfolded and realised; in it, as in him, the divine and the human were one and indistinguishable; and its righteousness was his righteousness — not ethical but spiritual, not taking account of judgment, or of an outward law, but wholly a growth from grace. Like him, it had the heritage of a perversely disposed nature and must be sanctified by the Father; and, like him, having been sanctified, it was sent into the world

The Community at Jerusalem.

—into a system expressing through inveterate habit this perverse disposition; and its mission, like his, was through love to reconcile the world unto God. "Be ye Christ unto all men"—this was its commission.

The purpose of this association was not ecclesiastical; it contemplated a life, not a ritual—a continuous life together, like that of a family. It followed the Lord's example in its attitude toward the Jewish religion. There was no attempt to initiate a new ceremonial. Its first assembling was outwardly a part of the great feast then being celebrated. "Continuing daily with one accord in the temple," these Galileans were not distinguished from the other celebrants of the feast by any peculiar observances. It was not that they were clinging to the old fabric—they were clinging to their people, regardless of place or season, to draw them into the way of life. They gave no thought to outward form, old or new. It was a period of fusion, not of crystallisation.

And yet this new Society had an economy of outward life wholly new, except as it was patterned after that which had been practised by the little company on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. It was a household of faith. "And all that believed were together and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, as every man had need." There were no class distinctions. None sought mastery over his brethren, but rather each was the servant of all, in honor preferring all the others.

There was a new revelation as to the mighty possibilities of association itself, in which the power of all becomes the power of each, both to receive and to communicate the divine life.

XI

THERE is in such an association, in this Brotherhood of Man, this equal love of all, that correspondence with Nature which we have found in every trait of our Lord's life and of the kingdom which he unfolded.

Correspondence of this Fellowship to Nature.

That men should unite their forces in the reception of the divine bounty of Nature is on their part a fitting response to that union of all the forces and elements of Nature through which this bounty is given. It is a response for which Nature, indeed, waits, that the fulness of her bounty may be manifest. We have misconceived Nature as we have God Himself. We have called her a hard mistress, imputing to her our own hardness. We have stood shamelessly in her presence with all our strifes and jealousies and self-seekings, until the earth seems indeed accursed for our sake, answering only to the tiresome drudgery of our hands and the sweat of our brows. All of her domain that has come within our power we have wrested from divine uses by our greed and selfishness, and by our perversion and neglect have tainted her fields and her streams. In the realm of her own absolute control — in her sunshine and her rain — how generous she is, how wholesome even in her violences!

As distinctly as possible she saith unto us, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life. My yoke is easy and my burden is light. But ye must be born again. Ye must come, loving one another, and ye must come all as one. I cannot answer with a full blessing unto one, or unto a few; but when ye have joined hands, in singleness of hearts, ye shall know the glory which from the beginning I have waited to give unto you."

In every way she shows us not only the beauty but the strength of harmony. The frail bridge that bears a regiment of straggling soldiers breaks under their measured and mated steps. The tower, still as death under jangling bells, rocks with the vibration of harmonious chimes. All the forces of Nature lend themselves unto accords. The comprehension of this is the key to the most marvellous discoveries of the future, to yet undreamed-of combinations and reinforcements of energy, aye, even to communication with other worlds.

The divine life in spiritual operation responds to association, dominating its harmonies, and in the complete accord of humanity is the restoration to man of the power and wisdom which belong to the sons of God.

XII

THE intense fervor of this first Christian Society, which rendered impossible any immediate crystallisation into a ritual of its sublime faith, also prevented its systematic regulation of social life. Communism was spontaneous, a matter of course, and not the product of a theory or the expression of justice. It was a fruit of the life which they had received, a life so exalted that material possessions seemed of little worth, of no worth, indeed, save for their immediately necessary and vital use. The distribution was not equal, but according to need. Even a supervision of this simple divestiture and distribution was an afterthought, arising from necessity. These Christians were not contemplating a system, an economy, or an environment — they were expressing love.

The Society based upon no Theory.

There is an illustration of the awfulness of this love in the episode of Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part

of the price for which they had sold their goods, sealing their deception with a lie. Their death is not the result of a miracle performed by Peter, though we shudder as we read the words addressed by him to Sapphira—so different does their spirit seem from that of our Lord, who condemned not the most degraded sinner, and whose power was never exercised for the destruction but only for the restoration of life. But it is not Peter or Ananias or Sapphira that is dominant here, but the Presence in which they are all standing—the Spirit of Love. In the presence of Justice the situation would have no peculiar significance. The moral sense would be satisfied by a simple decree of expulsion from the society. But, before this Love which giveth all and asketh nought but love—what answer? One might resist the Spirit in perverse blindness and still live, yea, and still be followed by him; but having received him, and, looking in his face, to do him violence by this mockery of self-hiding and self-seeking, or even by so much as a selfish plea for justice, would bring on a mortal shock. Where Justice itself is slain, can fraud and falsehood live?

It was some such terrible reaction that drove Judas—who had dwelt in the presence of the gentle Jesus even unto the last supper—to that fatal headlong plunge and bursting asunder in Aceldama.

XIII

Is it an over-strain—this exaltation, this mighty illumination, in which all outward systems vanish, and all material things are transparent veils scarcely hiding the spirit; in which physical life itself is so readily surrendered, as if it were a mere incident to the endless life; and in which the daily breaking of bread is regarded as a sacrament?

The disciples follow their Lord into the very heavens. We may call it ecstasy — but it is not, therefore, unreal; it is not an hallucination. A stream hath not only its onward even flow, but also invisible currents of exhalation, which are equally natural. Also the descent of the mist and its reappearance in seemingly grosser forms is natural. In Nature there is no morbid strain. Her vitality is manifest in the quickness of all her transformations from heavy to light or from light to heavy, from death unto life or from life unto death. There is nothing unwholesome in her, even in the bewildering variety of her types; she teaches us the catholic sympathy which includes all these, from the leviathan to the gold-fish, from the toad to the butterfly, from the ape to the man.

A Natural and Wholesome Ecstasy.

Our Lord was exalted through a sanctification and a heavenly glory such as was never shown in any other individual man; but his contact with the earth was catholic and wholesome; he came eating and drinking, horrifying the Jews by unwashen hands, and having associations that even to Pagan refinement would have seemed compromising. It was the divine habit in his life.

In so far as the Spirit which was in him has free course in his disciples, this same divine habit will appear in them — this readiness of reaction, of earthly reprisal, this catholicity of sympathy. It is shown in the bond of love uniting them all as one household; in the fact that all the kindreds of the earth are included in the blessing; in the absence of that spiritual pride which would lead them to set themselves apart from the rest of the people; and in the wholesome enjoyment of social life. And they, "breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people."

There is every sign of the highest spiritual operation in this community, and the most manifest of all is the absence of asceticism. There is nothing to suggest a comparison with the monastic communities of a later period — no seclusion, no pietism. There is intense illumination; and, while it is not hidden, but is, on the contrary, a continual witnessing, there is no systematic proselytism. The predication is irrepressible; it is the fresh, spontaneous gushing of the fountain of life.

There is but the most meagre record of this first movement of the Christian spirit. Such movements are never recorded — it is their happiness, as it is our loss. The *Acts of the Apostles* was written in another generation and in another atmosphere. In writing the Gospel which bears his name, Luke had abundant material in the living memories of our Lord's doings and sayings, and in partial records already made; but in writing the *Acts*, he had no such data, from which he might give us a view of the most precious portion of the simplest and most glorious manifestation of the Christian impulse that the world has ever known. The communications between these brethren, their prophesyings, the beauty and tenderness and steadfast charm of their accord — of these there is no record. We have but a glimpse of the wonderful scenes that transpired in Solomon's porch. It has but a brief period — this Paradise of the Regenerate; and we know as little of it as we know of Eden. It is beyond the power of the imagination to conceive — this dream of the heart's desire; we shall never know, until again the dream come true!

XIV

The Frailty of this Social Manifestation.

THIS first Christian Society was not a perfect illustration of the possibilities of association; but, such was its simplicity of faith and so close its following of Christ, and therefore of Nature, that all subsequent Christian organisations and movements seem like lapses from a first estate — the fall of the Regenerate. There is the burst of dawn, a mighty illumination, and then from all sides a dense mist flows in as from some all-surrounding and illimitable sea of darkness. Not fully comprehending the divine plan, we are apt to forget that this thick vapor is itself due to the operation of the very sun which is hidden thereby, and which must finally dispel it.

It must be that lapses are a feature of God's own plan. We find no place for judgment, and even He judgeth not — He least of all. To Him the ascent appeareth where we see only the fall.

We see this glory of the Christ become flesh, followed by the Pentecostal glory of the Christ becoming all flesh. We do not see why this manifestation should not steadily continue until all mankind is redeemed. Is there any lack of power in this divine life that it should slacken, or its light be dimmed? Faith is so simple — only the willingness to receive the life; and the fruits of this life are so desirable — love, peace and joy; why, then, should not all discords be immediately resolved?

But it would be as pertinent to inquire why there should ever have been a discord to be resolved. Where shall we find the point from which we may judge the actions or reactions of the divine alchemy? It is life which we confront, not a machine. And the glory of the life is

in some mysterious way associated with its frailty. There would seem to be a divine abhorrence of what we call perfection, as of what we call righteousness—an aversion from equilibrium, uniformity, faultless symmetry. To be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect is to be faultful according to any human standard of perfection. What we would reasonably and ethically consider a perfect world would be the sport of Nature and a subject of divine raillery.

With what, indeed, shall the human reason be satisfied? "And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? . . . They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

What contrasts, what apparent incongruities, are included within the scope not simply of the sufferance but even of the vital operation of the divine love and wisdom! As in an unvital faith we misconceive God, so, in the same way, do we misconceive His kingdom, and arbitrarily draw the lines which separate it from the world. These lines are not only invisible to us, but in the divine view they vanish entirely, since He seeth the end from the beginning, and knoweth no evil. But, while only the Father knoweth the end, yet the Son, in revealing unto us the Father, hath unfolded the kingdom, and hath shown us whereby we may distinguish it from the world, and from his unfolding we see that this distinction is not arbitrary—that the children of the kingdom are those whose wills are

in accord with the heavenly Father's; that we cannot judge by outward professions, since so many call him Lord whom He hath never known, nor by present consent, since some, saying they come, come not, while others who refuse yet finally come — so that we can find no fold but that there are sheep of His outside thereof.

XV.

The life of the Christian cannot be distinguished from that of other men by its opposition to divine intents clearly indicated in Nature. The most erroneous conceptions of the divine life arise from such opposition.

Natural Intimations of Human Society.

Our Lord has brought us so close to Nature, as a divine standard of truth, that her light is constantly blended with his revelation. In the frankness of this light, reinforced by his word and by the further illumination of the Spirit, our misconceptions vanish.

We see that primal impulses and passions which we have called by hard names fulfil a divine intent, even beyond the scope of their immediate aims, and that, in the line of this intent, they are intensified and accompanied by delights. Nature not only invites to eager possession, but indicates by example, in her own wild life, even violence, which has in it no hatred. This "ravening with tooth and claw" is altogether wholesome. The wolf that rends the sheep for food has no more ill-will in his quick violence than has the shepherd, who yearly fleeces and finally slays them with the same intent.

But we see also, in this frank light, that, while God in Nature eschews morbid indifference to His bounty, much more He abhors the morbid greed of them that love things for themselves, that accumulate treasure beyond

the quick and wholesome use thereof, and that, to satisfy this greed, indulge in wanton violence in their pursuit, and by their rapacity take advantage of their brethren. In the light of Nature as of the Gospel, a man's life is not in the abundance of the things he possesseth; life is more than meat and the body than raiment.

Moreover we see that Nature indicates no arbitrary limit to the simplicity of life. It is not a question as between crudeness and refinement, between sitting upon the ground and upon benches, between a habit of sheepskin and one of fine linen, between a hut and a mansion, between rude and improved mechanical contrivances. The bareness of life is not essential to its simplicity. Nature freely gives us all things—the fruits of the earth, the fleeces and flesh of her flocks, her gold and silver and precious stones, and all her forces, for the service of life; and she gives them to all alike, even as she gives her rain and her sunshine; and there is abundance for all, at so slight an expense of effort on our part as not to interfere with our higher life, if we do our part, as Nature does hers, in the complete harmony of our united strength.

In the interdependencies and interchanges of all her realm, Nature has even indicated the activities of human commerce, offering, indeed, a similitude of that complex system which we call civilisation. She has her progress also from one stage of development to another, refining upon her own types.

But, in all these indications and anticipations of what we call the worldly scheme, (often arbitrarily distinguishing it from the divine,) Nature negatively teaches—by what is excluded from her realm—what our Lord has positively taught, namely: the perversion and abuse by which this worldly scheme antagonises that of the kingdom. She has violence but not hatred; prodigality of life, so that it

seems waste, but not wanton excess or abusive license; infinite complexity and diversity, but not discord. Her seeming inertia is the veiling of her might; her indolences cover the swarming of restless activities, even as her calms hide whirlwinds, and the steadfastness of her stars is the resultant of her immeasurable velocities. In all things, in her tensions and her relaxations, in her syntheses and her dissolutions, she is quick with the quickness of the Spirit; and that which she gives us and reveals unto us is that which our Lord brought us, and which the divine spirit quickens in us and ever shows us—it is Life. It is the morbid, the death which stays and which imprisons the soul, that is excluded from every divine realm.

How clearly, then, Nature reflects our Lord's teaching, that our choice of the better part is not in that we possess few things, but in that we have not that care for many things which corrupts the heart. All the quick delights of a natural life are wholesome; but self-indulgence, the relaxations of luxurious ease, idle business and busy idleness, are unnatural and morbid. What does not immediately serve Life tends to degeneration and spiritual death.

The natural law is the spiritual law, not only for the individual but for society. Nothing is more surely indicated as a divine intent than that we should associatively possess the earth—fully, eagerly and joyously. Such a possession is possible only to all humanity, united in one brotherhood, not through the organisation of justice, but through the spontaneous operation of the spirit of love—that is, through regeneration.

XVI

Strength and Weakness of the first Christian Society.

In the first Christian Society there was the operation of this spirit, and, as the result of the impulse, we behold the highest wave ever seen not only of spiritual but of social life. So unique, so without precedent and without any adequate sequent, was the movement of faith, inspiration, prophecy and fraternal love in this nascent Christianity that it has been tacitly or expressly assumed, in all theological interpretation, that the first Christian generation was a supernatural age.

But as there can be no partial salvation, so no social movement which is not universal, including all humanity, can perfectly exemplify the Christian principle of association. Moreover there were other causes of imperfection in the original Christian community at Jerusalem, the chief of which were the hostility of the Jews and the conservative instinct binding these earliest Christians to Judaism. In the ages that follow we shall note lapse after lapse from this exaltation of the first Christian generation, through the development of official ecclesiasticism, from the establishment of episcopacy to the official recognition of the Church under Constantine — lapses, as they seem to us, but nevertheless contemplated in the divine plan; for God is not especially regarding this community at Jerusalem, nor its successors at Antioch or Ephesus or Rome, but hath in view the regeneration of humanity.

XVII

The Spiritual Value of Instability.

It is only when we consider large movements, entire cycles, that we see the value of instability. In the history of the Jewish people we note the divine providence by which, through prophetic revulsions, it was saved from an imperial establishment. Its history conclusively demonstrates the opposite of De Tocqueville's assertion, that the nation which does not believe must serve, showing rather that faith itself may be preserved through submission to servitude. It was the least spiritual of all ancient peoples that acquired the mastery of the world. Nearly every great religion has flourished in its transplantations rather than in its original birthplace. Every historic movement is like a harmonic series having its dominant, through which is begun a new series. Through flight, or exile, or wandering the divine purposes are accomplished.

On the other hand it is the conservative instinct which appears to be the strongest characteristic of any development, left to itself. The climbing plant, with a force equal to that of its ascent, thrusts its roots into the earth; and these roots remain, though the branches be despoiled of leaves and flowers and fruit; nay, they keep in storage the very juices of vitality under the protecting snows of winter. Thus there is not only the continuity of life, but there are stations, abiding-places, tents, tabernacles, and temples. Our loves are not fleeting and fickle, but firm and tender holdings, such as make homes, hamlets, fraternities. Love hath this homing-instinct so fixed that it must needs have its dominant, or variant centre, in marriage, so that there may be at least new homes. Out of this instinct grow fond memories, and, from the breaking

of its tendrils, arise regrets; so that a prominent concern in the thought of a future life relates to the recognition of those loved and cherished in the present.

Thus in the spiritual life there is not only the apostolic mission, but the standing and waiting, and deep thrusting of roots into the soil — there are the open, waiting deeps of the soul ready to receive the life which fills as well as quickens; so that contemplation seems even larger than action.

Our Lord, with that fidelity to Nature which was the divine habit in him, shows in his life and in his word both tendencies. There must be the readiness to leave all, to loosen all earthly ties and holdings, to lose life itself in order to do the Father's will. God is a spirit, and the hour cometh when He is not to be worshipped "either on this mountain or yet at Jerusalem." He looks upon the temple to predict its destruction, upon Jerusalem to forecast its desolation. Yet his footsteps linger in familiar haunts; the range of his wanderings is not wide; he seeks not patients for his healing, but they come unto him; we do not read of his going unto Nicodemus or others but of their coming to him; so far is he from proselyting that he restrains his disciples from prematurely telling any that he is the Christ; he never in any way indicates a departure from the Jewish faith, and his last command to his disciples is to await the outpouring of the Spirit at Jerusalem. After his ascension, Jerusalem becomes the centre of the new faith, so blended with the old that the Pharisees, so hostile to him, seeing the devotion of his disciples, are for the most part reconciled unto them,— many of them, because of the prominence given to his resurrection, becoming his followers.

But for the hostility of the Sadducees, on account of this same doctrine of the Resurrection, the community under

the leadership of Peter and James and John would have continued at Jerusalem, strengthening their affiliations with Judaism. In doing this, and in waiting for the world to come to the Holy City, they would have seemed to be imitating the example of their Lord.

Suddenly what the Lord had said — that he came not to bring peace but a sword — is brought to their remembrance. Stephen, one of their elders and strongest prophets, is brought before the council. "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The writer of the *Acts* says that a false charge was brought against him; namely, that he had said that "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." Plainly, the enemies of the disciples are forcing upon them the issue which they will not themselves make, though it is the very vitality of their Gospel. Even at this solemn hour Stephen himself accepts not this issue, but charges upon the Jews the resistance to the law in that they have been the betrayers and murderers of his Lord. Then they cast him out of the city and stone him to death.

"And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And, when he had said this, he fell asleep."

How wonderful the situation in all its elements! Here is the first Christian martyr; not one of the original disciples, but a proselyte, who has become the most earnest of the seven deacons chosen by the apostles; the boldest in his predication, so that he has aroused the hostility of even the Pharisees by touching their traditions, as the

Lord had done; brought before the council to answer to the same charge that had been brought against the Lord, and now that Lord's first witness unto death. Yet he dies holding firmly to Judaism, citing the law and the prophets in his defence, and knowing nothing in the law which should separate him from the Christ, who in his thought is the fulfilment thereof — so that, while appealing to Moses, yet looking upward he seeth "the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

And yonder stands Paul, consenting unto this death, he who is to be the Apostle unto the Gentiles and the leader of the reaction against Judaism.

Of these two men, neither of whom has seen the Christ, save in the spirit, the one is through his death in an important sense the founder of the Christian church, and the other through his word the founder of Christian theology.

"I am not come to bring peace but a sword." As the Lord was personally delivered over to the high priests and elders, that he might be glorified, so in the society which is the embodiment of his Spirit must he be forever delivered up. Gamaliel, who would protect this society at Jerusalem, is putting it under bonds, while his young disciple Paul, to whom it is given over for zealous persecution, is to develop its freedom.

Comfortably established at Jerusalem, Peter and James and John will continue to look upon the Christ as only the culminating glory of Judaism, as only the Son of Man prophesied by Daniel, and upon his resurrection as of that sort to which the Pharisees have been looking for so long; and the Holy City will be regarded as the center of a kingdom soon to be established on the earth which shall include all peoples — which shall also include all times, since there is to be a general resurrection, of which Christ is only the first fruits.

With what difficulty, and after what commotions and convulsions, is this conception eradicated, if indeed it can be said to have ever been eradicated from the minds of these disciples. Certainly in the *Apocalypse*, written nearly a generation later by John, the last surviving disciple, this idea is still dominant.

The persecution which began with the slaughter of Stephen compelled a scattering abroad, quickening among the disciples a missionary spirit, so that the Gospel was preached in Samaria, Phœnicia, Cyprus and Antioch, though unto none but the Jews.

But it is Paul himself, the leader of this persecution, who is to be the great Christian missionary of this generation.

XVIII

THE prejudices of men are more precious unto God than are their tolerances and indifferences. They may be the result of ignorance, but they are the signs of vitality. How shall the meek inherit the earth, save as the world antagonising them shall be brought into the way of life? To resist the Spirit with zeal is to come within its quickening influence. So at least it was with Paul.

Paul's Attitude toward Jerusalem.

His career was one of the divine surprises. As an Apostle not of their choosing, he was as much an occasion of astonishment and consternation to the disciples at Jerusalem as he had been when as a persecutor he "made havock of the church." He was the Protestant of the first Christian generation and had the faults as well as the virtues of Protestantism. His apostolate was not only a development of Christianity but in some sort its perversion, or, rather, the occasion of its perversion in

others, who, as St. Peter saith, wrest to their own destruction some things in his epistles which are hard to be understood.

It may have been when he looked upon the radiant face of the dying Stephen that Paul felt within him the first quickening of the Spirit. It was a face reflecting the passion of the dying Lord, and Stephen's last words were an echo of the Lord's prayer to the Father for the forgiveness of his murderers. As a Pharisee, moreover, Paul may have been impressed by the importance which the disciples attached to the Lord's resurrection, which became afterward to him the very corner-stone of the foundation of the Christian faith. Certainly, on his way to Damascus, to continue his persecution, he is suddenly arrested by the vision and the voice that ever afterward dominate his life. He had not, like the disciples, that familiar association with the Lord which was ever like a divine spell upon them, holding them as within a charmed circle of glorious memories, so that even in their utmost exaltation there is a sweet restraint upon their tarrying footsteps, their halting mood, their waiting thought. His way cannot be quite their way, though he is led by the same Spirit. His is a purely inward vision of the Christ, prompting to quick action, to sudden departures. Henceforth to him the Mosaic law, the Jewish ordinances and traditions, savor only of the death he leaves behind him. The letter killeth; the Spirit giveth life. His Gospel is the Gospel of the liberty of the sons of God.

He seeks no confirmation of his mission from the twelve. According to his own account, he avoids Jerusalem, and will not build upon any other man's foundation. His apostolate is the Gentile world, which he traverses with bewildering rapidity, laboring abundantly and suffering abundantly. Yet, by his own profession, he is a Hebrew

of the Hebrews, and his preaching is first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. In every large city in the Roman world there is a Jewish colony, and wherever he journeys his first visit is to a Jewish synagogue. If the Jews turn against him, still the Gentiles will receive him; and so the Gospel is preached throughout the whole circuit of the Mediterranean.

It is the Gospel of a new religion. Shortly after Paul's first appearance at Antioch, the followers of the Lord first begin to be called Christians. Circumcision is abandoned. The Passover is no longer a Jewish feast. Christ is Paul's Passover. Faith has a new meaning, wholly distinct from its former association with Judaism.

Paul's epistles to the churches of his foundation not only show the nature and extent of his apostolic work and the difficulties which he experienced from Judaising Christians, but these first writings of the New Testament contain the complete armory of Protestant theology; indeed, they might be said to be addressed to Protestant churches — the protest not being against the Gospel as preached by the disciples at Jerusalem, but against the authority of Mosaic tradition as applicable to Christian believers, and of official ecclesiasticism as determining the limitations of Christian truth.

As to ecclesiastical authority, there is scarcely enough thereof to elicit a protest — only a tendency shown in the disposition of James to prescribe, through an official letter, regulations for the Gentile churches. Considered as an organisation, the Christian church is still in its infancy. There is as yet no episcopate in the modern sense of the term. There are no church edifices, outside of the synagogues; and, when meetings cannot be held in these, they are held in the houses of individuals. The simple organisation of the Jewish synagogue is the pattern of that

adopted in the churches. The council at Jerusalem to consider the question of circumcision is an informal convention, whose object is the promotion of concord among those who have one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

XIX

In doctrine Paul takes a wide and abrupt departure from the position held by the disciples. It is a departure in that it *is* a doctrine. In substance the main features of his faith are but a development of our Lord's own utterances — a development through the quickening and leading of the Spirit. He preaches the Christ as the Christ is revealed to him, and it is the same Christ which was visibly manifest to the disciples in Galilee; but he has a vision of him not affected by those personal associations which are so precious to them; it is a vision from which the earthly lineaments are eliminated. We have seen that our Lord not only taught his disciples the spiritual meaning of the law and the prophets; the vanity of mere outward observances; the principle of love rather than the way of sacrifices; divine grace rather than human righteousness, as the basis of eternal life; the revelation of truth through the Spirit and not through flesh and blood; but also, as to himself in the flesh, guarded them against his very nearness, save as they should regard it as the nearness of the Father. He had taught them not in definitions and formal statements of truth, but in parables, and they had accepted the truth as life; slowly but surely the glory with which the Father had glorified him had grown before their waiting eyes and had enveloped them, being communicable unto them, so that they were one with him, as he was one with the Father; they held the truth as it was given to them in its natural realism, without

Paul's Doctrine.

sophistication, and scarcely venturing to give it a purely intellectual form, lest its divine charm and vitality should escape.

Upon Paul there was no such restraint. Rather he was constrained by the Spirit to give expression to the faith which was in him with all the energies of his mind as well as of his heart. The operation of the Spirit does not suppress or suspend individuality. The divine life in Paul was Paul's life as in Peter it was Peter's, and their expansion and exaltation under its influence did not prevent their frailty or protect them against fallibility. The Spirit is given to every man, as it was to the Hebrew prophets, in so far as he is in the living way, but its sanctification and inspiration do not insure perfection of action or of expression. It is the same Spirit which moved Isaiah that moved Paul and Peter. But both the reception and the operation are different for Paul and Peter because of the Christ.

Christ is everything to Paul as he is to Peter and John, but his expression of the Christ-spirit in life and utterance is different from theirs in temper, attitude, and method. He is to the end always and distinctively Paul. He is a scholar, in a sense in which the disciples are not, accustomed to dialectic disputation; and while, in his humility, he would throw away all his learning as foolishness, he cannot, and his discourse follows the habit of his logical training. In action he has a martial attitude; he is athletic, resolute, self-dependent. He has been more completely identified with the strict orthodoxy of Judaism than have the disciples, who have been so closely drawn to their Lord; therefore his reaction against it, after his sudden conversion, is strong and uncompromising. They have more of the child-like spirit which yields readily to authority, save as it would array them against their Lord. But,

so strong in Paul is the habit of even his repudiated Judaism, that we find more of it in his epistles than in those of Peter and John. They would never have thought of the Mosaic law as the schoolmaster which led them to Christ. They would never have sharply distinguished between justification by faith and justification by works, because justification itself had no prominent place in their thoughts. To them Christ was simply life;—salvation was from the life. To Paul also Christ was the life, but he was moreover the all-sufficient substitute for Judaism—his once-for-all offered sacrifice for its burnt-offerings; his righteousness, imputed to the believer, for its righteousness; justification by faith in him for its justification by the works of the law.

Paul's sudden dislocation from Judaism and his close relations with the Gentile world intensified the conscious conflict in his own mind between elements which in the minds of the disciples had never been arrayed in sharp antagonism against each other. They accepted Judaism as they believed it had been accepted by their Lord, laying little stress upon its formalities, thinking of love rather than of either sacrifices or justification. The question of communion with uncircumcised Christians first made them conscious of an antagonism, but Peter and James forthwith restored concord, they themselves holding to their old custom, while not insisting upon its acceptance by the Gentiles. Peter had already had the heavenly vision teaching him not to call unclean what God hath cleansed; and he had seen that the uncircumcised Cornelius, even before he was baptised, received the gifts of the Spirit notwithstanding. Prejudice remained on both sides, illustrating the fallibility of human nature even in Christians. And it is doubtless true that Paul's strong feeling on this subject had much to do in determining

the character of his epistles, in so far as they dealt with Christianity in its relation to the Mosaic law.

But Paul, with all his sharpness of definition and insistent logic, has not that lifeless mechanism which is so characteristic of modern theology. The full current of Christian vitality is in all his discourse. If there is crystallisation, there is fervor also. If the lines are clearly and tensely drawn, it is because his thoughts, like the swift arrow of an expert archer, go straight to their goal. His imagination has the flame of the Spirit, and nowhere in inspired writings is there a more exalted expression than he has given us of the love of God and of human love. His epistles are triumphal chants, whose subjects are love, freedom and universal salvation. His idea of predestination is so expansive that it would burst the cerements of any formal creed. His idea of mortification has nothing in common with later asceticism. It was a part of his repudiation of Judaism, this renunciation of the flesh and of its works; and it was also a revulsion against the vile degradation of the body which he encountered everywhere in the Gentile world. His spiritual exaltation leads him to expressions which may easily be misconstrued; but we find the key to his position in his own words: Thenceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. He is not a theologian — however true it may be that he is the cause of theology in others — but the inspired Prophet of Christian doctrine.

The position of the disciples at Jerusalem and that of Paul has each its separate and peculiar frailty and peril. In the one there is the danger of ecclesiastical formalism and of ecclesiastical despotism; in the other there is the danger of intellectual formalism, of mechanical concep-

tions, at first limiting, and finally tending to altogether exclude, the divine life and truth. So long as there is, on the one hand, the vitality of the Christian faith in Peter and John, and, on the other, the exaltation of Paul, these perils will appear only as tendencies; but they will develop in future generations a mortal corruption.

Not once, but repeatedly, must Christ be delivered up, not only to persecution by his enemies, but to denial and betrayal by his own disciples. There must be the bruising of grapes for the wine of the kingdom. It is the divine plan and, in the largest vision, the prophet seeth who he is that treadeth the wine-press.

After the period which ends with the martyrdom of Stephen, the impressive fact of the first Christian generation is that the most active of the apostles was one of Stephen's persecutors, receiving his apostolic commission not from the twelve but directly from God; a fact which is an everlasting protest against human authority in spiritual affairs, and which is moreover an illustration of a divine wisdom transcending human judgments and expectations. We draw an arbitrary line separating between those who are His and those who are not His, and behold, He chooses from them that are not known as His. The Jews were, in their own esteem, God's chosen people, but Christendom became Gentile. The Levites were regarded as His holy priesthood, but the Christ was not of the tribe of Levi. The disciples regarded themselves as the sole depositaries, for loosing or binding, of the spiritual powers conferred upon them by their Lord; but in their own day they beheld the greatest expansion of the kingdom going on outside of their jurisdiction, through one from whose breathings of slaughter they had fled, and who had received the Spirit without the laying of their hands upon him.

XX

Marvellous Spread of Christianity.

CHRISTIANITY is already face to face with the world. Its spread is wondrously rapid, assisted materially by every outward circumstance — by the ease of communication on land and sea in a time of great commercial activity; by the spiritual indifference of Roman rulers, leading to toleration during the infancy of the church; by the wide dispersion of the Jews, who have a colony in every important city of the world, whose adherence to the traditions of their fathers has been to some extent relaxed by their separation from Jerusalem, and whose synagogues give the new faith its first foothold. Its strongest appeal is to the poor, the despised, the oppressed; and, in the Roman world, these are the immense majority. Its inherent vitality, reaching peoples whose old faiths have lost their vital impulse, and who are not only depressed but degraded, has a mysterious communicability. The disposition of the poor to form fraternal associations for mutual help and protection is a marked characteristic of this age, prevailing to such an extent as to call forth repressive edicts, so that the brotherhoods are disguised as Burial Societies. To them the gospel of fraternity comes as a fulfilled dream. Active and zealous as Paul is in his missionary work, he finds everywhere that in some way the Gospel has anticipated him and found a lodgment in the hearts of men. Persecution, arising at first almost entirely from Jewish antagonism, has only contributed to a more rapid growth and expansion.

All these circumstances have affected the faith itself, giving it special tendencies. The poverty of its adherents, together with their acceptance of the principle of submission unto the powers that be, as ordained of God, has

brought into undue prominence the compensations of a future life for the miseries of the present, and intensified the expectation of an early end of the world. Persecution, also, while it has increased the fervor of the faithful, has also brought a kind of extreme unction to those ever living in the presence of death, and the overstrained attitude characteristic of religious devotees. In all ways, and at all times, is the lesson taught us that only in the universal regeneration of society can Christianity be wholly itself and fully illustrate its own spiritual laws. The communism of the first Christian society at Jerusalem could not be maintained in the midst of a general system in antagonism therewith, any more than one could warm the wintry world through open doors from his own household hearth. Constantly the poor at Jerusalem are the occasion of solicitude to the Gentile churches. The first word of Christianity to all men is that they must stand or fall together.

XXI

Before the close of its first century Christianity has turned its face westward, leaving far behind it the cedars of Lebanon and the Mount of Olives. Already, before the appearing of our Lord, there had been a wide dispersion of the Jews over the world, in the accomplishment of that divine purpose manifest in the uprooting of peoples from their native soil, a series of dislocations and separations necessary as a preparation for universal brotherhood. Moreover these dispersed Jews had Hellenised, had exchanged the Hebrew for the Greek tongue. Paul was born a Hellenist, and thus was especially fitted for his mission as an apostle to the Gentiles. We see how completely, though unconsciously, the Roman

Westward Movement of Christianity.

masters of the world have become the servitors of God, not only in their forced union of all nations under the empire, but in their conservation of the Greek culture, which from its chief centres — Rome, Athens, Alexandria, Tarsus, Ephesus and Corinth — both prepares the way for Christianity and has so much to do with its development, being, moreover, itself the only element of Pagan civilisation which has in it any lofty spiritual suggestion.

But it is in the destruction of Jerusalem that Rome is eminently the divine servitor. This event is preceded by the monstrous persecutions both of Jews and Christians by Nero, the Anti-Christ of the Apocalypse, and by civil commotions, famines, earthquakes and plagues throughout the world — all of which enter into and intensify the dramatic vision seen by John on Patmos. For the foot of Christian or Jew there would seem to be no sure resting-place on the face of the earth. Is it strange that the end of the world should seem to be at hand?

After this storm, enveloping the world, and culminating in the fall of the Holy City — what a clearing up! The structure of Judaism is gone forever; only its prophetic spirit — the pre-evangel of our Lord — survives. Of the twelve there only remains John, the beloved disciple. Peter and Paul have both perished, victims of the Neronian persecution. But the faith survives the shock which has convulsed all its outward holdings, and is ere long to give forth its most significant and triumphant note in the fourth Gospel, from Ephesus.

But the spirit of the disciples at Jerusalem is stronger now that the old structure is violently torn away from them. It is transferred from Jerusalem to Rome. Thus emancipated, it is the life of the church in its new ecclesiastical development under the episcopate, and for a long time the peculiar characteristics of Paul's doctrine are

buried out of sight even in the churches of his own establishment. The primacy of Peter is maintained.

The churches established by Paul did not have that evangelic current of life which those had that listened to the preaching of Peter and John. It was not because the Gospels had not yet been committed to writing. Wherever the disciples went, they carried not only the evangelic atmosphere but the living record in their memories of the wonderful life of Jesus of Nazareth. In the nature of the case it could not be thus with Paul. He was not ignorant of the facts of Christ's life or of his sayings; but after his conversion his life was one of incessant activity, and he caught only the general spirit and the great argument of the Gospel. Even Luke, who was his companion for a time, was not an eye-witness, and speaks of his own Gospel as a compilation. When, therefore, these Western churches received the Gospel in its Galilean simplicity — some of them from Peter and all of them, in due time, from the written record — it was to them not, indeed, a new revelation of spiritual truth, but a refreshing influence from the very fountain of their life. For, whatever of legend may during a whole generation have crept into the record, still was there preserved the natural unfolding of the life and sayings of the Lord and, through these, of the kingdom of heaven, and more than this, the atmosphere and the circumstances of this wonderful drama, which were necessary to its full impression upon the spiritual sensibility. Always the embodiment is nearer the spiritual sense than any intellectual representation can be.

It is not, then, that any of the disciples is greater than Paul, but that the Gospel is greater than they all. Therefore it is that, after we have, in the history of early Christianity, turned our faces from Judea, leaving Jerusalem

and the Temple in ruins, still from the Holy Land a living influence follows, holding us at each remove by a spell not to be resisted, syllabling the familiar words of the Lord's prayer, of the Sermon on the Mount, and of many parables, and shaping, on the mountains, in the wilderness, by the Sea of Tiberias, in the peace of Bethany, and in the tumults of Jerusalem, all the scenes and situations of the Life of Lives.

XXII

In Paul's epistles written during his captivity at Rome, and in the fourth Gospel, we see evidences of a development in the Christian thought concerning Christ. Paul, in the more quiet and contemplative period of his imprisonment, and John, after a lifetime of contemplation, came upon common ground in their view of the eternal sonship of the Messiah. It was not a new thought, originated by them — since our Lord himself had said, "Before Abraham was I am"; but they gave it expansion and development, guided thereto by the divine Spirit. The expression of this thought in Paul is like that of a triumphant psalm celebrating the victory of humanity over sin and death, through Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature," and who is in us the hope of glory. In John it is the brooding calm of a fathomless and luminous heaven — the peace of the infinite Love. Again this exultation and peace shall find expression in the glorious chant of the Nicene symbol, and then fall into notional fragments, assuming, in lifeless creeds, definitions and limitations unknown to the Gospel, and having no more resemblance to its living realities than have fallen meteorites to the radiant stars.

Development of Christian Thought Concerning Christ.

XXIII

The Glory of Ante-Nicene Christianity.

From the destruction of Jerusalem until the time of Constantine, the Gospel is dominant in a way to subordinate all philosophy and even Paul's vigorous thought, which had been so important in connection with his Gentile mission while Judaism retained its vitality. When the new faith came into direct contact with Paganism, it reached the hearts of the multitude through the story of Jesus rather than through an appeal to the understanding. It is at a later period that Paul's doctrine and especially his spirit of freedom were to have their greatest influence. But during the second and third Christian centuries, while the church is organising about Rome as its principal centre, his voice is almost silent. Even in the crystallisation of doctrine in its Ante-Nicene stages it was not his thought which was predominant; and surely in the subsequent papal development it was not only ignored but antagonised.

Paul's method, as well as his doctrine, was found unnecessary. The most striking fact connected with the spread of Christianity in the Roman empire, after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter, is the absence of any strenuous missionary enterprise. The vitality of Christianity was such that it found its way into every household, and excited the alarm of civil magistrates and of the Pagan priests. All the culture of the empire gathered itself together to find some antidote in philosophy against what it considered a pestilent superstition. As to-day the opponents of Christianity try to find a substitute therefor in spiritualism and occultism, borrowing for these systems as much as they can of Christian truth and vitality, so, in those days, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and a revived

Pythagoreanism united their forces to dethrone the young and triumphant faith — endeavoring to imitate what they sought to destroy. But no mystical speculations, nor even imported or manufactured superstitions, were of any avail against a life. The Pagan Mysteries, in which the people had believed, in many ways anticipated and prepared them for the acceptance of an incarnate saviour who had been raised from the dead. As in his lifetime the multitudes had gathered about our Lord for his healing, so now the whole Pagan world seemed to press forward toward the healing fountain of life in the Gospel. The poor and the oppressed found in the loving brotherhood of Christians the fellowship denied them in the wholly Pharisaic organisation of Paganism in the Roman Empire. The Pagan temples were deserted, and all the real vitality of the Pagan faith seemed to go forth to feed a conflagration which involved the world.

Official Rome, hitherto so tolerant, save under the whimsical tyranny of a Nero, was aroused and sought to extinguish Christianity by persecution. But death had no terrors for them to whom it was the entrance to all they held most precious. The emperors were not moved by any religious zeal, and they soon found it tiresome to slay those who so eagerly sought martyrdom. The persecution was often relaxed; but sometimes, as under Decius, it extended throughout the empire. It was, however, constant enough to stimulate the faith, to intensify its fervor, and to multiply its adherents. It kept the Christians out of official life and free from its temptations and corruptions; it extinguished in them all worldly ambition, and all avarice, since they were secure in no material possession; and if it developed in them an unnatural contempt of life, and, driving them into the catacombs, laid the foundation of future asceticism and monasticism, yet

these tendencies were counteracted by the fact that they were drawn nearer together in brotherly love, and nearer to the source of all their life, so that their beautiful communion, divine and human, had much of the spiritual might and illumination which glorified the first Christian association at Jerusalem. Not only was the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church, but persecution was a divine nursery of a catholic communion, holding in abeyance the perils of ecclesiasticism.

While in this period the church feeling is intensified, so that there are signs of the belief that outside of the church there is no salvation; while the episcopate is firmly established, to such an extent that Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, declares that where the bishop is there is the church; and while, in this same Cyprian and other of the Fathers, there is shown the tendency to a stronger ecclesiastical organisation, recognising the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, yet there are as yet no traces of sacerdotalism. It may be truly said that in this period the Gospel is the dominant influence upon Christian life and thought.

The purity, sweetness and strength of the life of this age is hidden from us. Even in the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers we have but faint glimpses of the life of these children of a new world. Their meekness we know and their courage. They obeyed the laws of their rulers, but the excellence of their lives was beyond anything indicated in the laws. The world was agitated because of them, but they were filled with the Spirit, and, though fervent, were calm. They were not reformers. They were not antagonists. They were Witnesses. It was an age of simple, childlike faith — of faith in a Life and not in a Creed. The response to this faith was a work not less wonderful than the raising of the dead — the quickening of a new life in the world.

XXIV

Official Recognition of Christianity.

By a sudden revolution, Christianity becomes the state religion of the Empire. Christ is delivered over to the Roman death. Constantine calls the Christians from the catacombs, where they had life, into the place of the real sepulchre — the official atmosphere of the empire, and makes them who were but just now the servants and victims the masters of the world. While feebly comprehending the spiritual force of the new faith, Constantine clearly saw its possibilities as a power of movement and organisation on a worldly basis. It was the only power that could renovate society and build up a new civilisation — a Christian empire.

The result of this imperial alliance was twofold. The Christian leaven did renovate the old society, modifying its activities in every department, even in that of jurisprudence. And, on the other hand, the paralysis which had benumbed Rome was communicated to Christianity as an organisation, which, in the very acceptance of the alliance, surrendered the central principle of its vitality.

If it had been the divine purpose to illustrate the weakness of a Christian system humanly constructed and moved by worldly motives, such a purpose was effectually accomplished in the history of the Western church. The weakness of Christian sacerdotalism and ecclesiasticism was as fully demonstrated as had been that of Judaism. Starting from the principle that the visible church must be considered identical with the kingdom of heaven, it is just the opposite truth that is made apparent in this development. In its limitations of the divine life, it excludes that life. To have the mastery, to exercise authority, to build

up a strong outward structure upon the traditions of men, to take Christianity in hand and make it conform to the methods of the world, is to antagonise the divine Spirit and to give up Christ. The ecclesiasticism and the doctrine developed in such a system were a repudiation of the Gospel.

We are not, therefore, surprised by the sequel. The church adopted worldly methods. The decrees of her councils were secured by means that excite even worldly contempt. She became the persecutor of the faithful — her cruelties exceeding those of the Cæsars, even as the number of her victims were greater. In her greed for wealth and power she deluged the world with blood. She revived the Pagan priesthood, the Pagan idea of propitiatory sacrifice and the Pagan ritual with its splendid ceremonies and processions. She appealed to the fears of men. Her penances took the place of penitence, and casuistry was substituted for the Sermon on the Mount. Salvation itself was bought and sold for so many pieces of silver. The divine jurisprudence was patterned after that of this world, and a soteriological system, fashioned according to the perverse human ideas of divine justice, took the place of the free forgiveness of the Gospel. It was the old Rome, with its everlasting death! We date the dark ages from the overthrow of Rome by the Barbarians; on the contrary, it is through these invaders that the charnel-house is broken up and the light let in. It is Gothic newness of life embracing the genuine faith that becomes the hope of Christendom — Gothic men who revive Paul and the free Spirit of the Gospel.

XXV

The Church in the World and the World in the Church.

THIS record of failure, while it teaches that the visible church is fallible and that it is so far from being necessary to the kingdom that it may become the embodiment of all that is antagonistic thereto, is no reflection upon Christianity. Neither is it an evidence that there has ever ceased to be that invisible communion of God's children which is the real and continuous embodiment of the Christ-life. It was not the bride that became the harlot.

Christianity manifests the divine life upon the earth, even as the Christ was that life—the power over all flesh, the faith to which nothing is impossible, the association of brethren. Our wills and our understandings do not mould that life, but are moulded by it. We receive and wait and follow. The moment we take the mastery in any way we construct for ourselves a kind of life, but it is not the life of the kingdom. When we simply receive the Spirit and are moved thereby, there is outward expression, there is prophecy and interpretation, and the spontaneous growth of association, having no resemblance to any association shaped by human energy and thought—like a government, for example—but resembling rather that natural grouping which we call a family, which is a divine institution. How familiar are the indications and phrases representing such an association in the Gospel! What a world of meaning, relieving the nostalgia of the whole human family, in that one phrase—"In my Father's house"! Our Lord never saith, "thy fellow-man," but, "thy brother." He saith, "the kingdom," but is careful to distinguish it from the kingdom of this world. He takes his illustrations not from the world

of man's ethical and conventional adjustments, but from Nature.

There was, indeed, to be a development beyond what our Lord had definitely revealed, but it was to be under the guidance of the same Spirit — not on artificial lines but in living ways. As the body of a man is not, in its vital functions, under the control of his volition, so the spiritual life of the Christian Brotherhood is, in its vital functions, a divine operation, to which the human will and understanding, once surrendered, must be subject. The subjection is reasonable only because it is natural — that is, in perfect correspondence to the operations of all life. Abelard was right in applying the natural test to faith. But our Lord, being in complete harmony with Nature, could truly say, "If ye do my will, ye shall know the doctrine."

The world in the church stands upon a very different basis from that of the church in the world. Its authority is not natural, and is not reasonable. It is not in the living way, and its very traditions are lifeless.

XXVI

THERE is in the genuine Christian development a natural tradition of life from generation to generation; but it is as a stream which is borne onward with increasing volume and momentum, never turning backward. It is the immediate and continuous communication of impulse. The new generation not only by inheritance receives the life of the preceding, but has long enough contact therewith for the reception of all the lessons of a living experience. Wisdom comes as by a kind of induction through the contact of the young with the old. If the current of life is full and the progressive impulse strong, it is a quick induction, and the young

Natural Tradition.

life the more easily speeds ahead of the old, and the pre-existing relation is inverted — the inspiration of youth is communicated to age; and it is a part of the wisdom of the elders that they expect and readily yield to this inspiration, rejoicing that they may share this new heritage — this increment of glory. And this is the meaning of the Scripture respecting the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children. In such a tradition the fathers do not arbitrarily impose the form of their own life upon the children, much less the limitations of remote generations. The prophet is succeeded by new and greater prophets, and not by a school of commentators. In such a development no period can be distinguished as an age of supernaturalism — the greatest wonders must ever be to come; there is no conclusion of inspiration, no crystallisation into unchangeably fixed forms of life or of belief, no unyielding stability of any sort.

XXVII

Civilisation as shown in History.

Both the worldly life and that of the kingdom, while rooted in the heart — one in a heart resisting the divine Spirit, the other in a heart quickened by that Spirit — have their expression wholly in an outward organic development upon the earth. One development we call civilisation, and the other was called by our Lord the kingdom of heaven.

What is this which we call civilisation, considered as an embodiment of the worldly scheme?

The desire for conquest and for material advantage has for the most part dominated the movements of mankind as recorded in history. The highways of the world have been first laid out by the soldier, and the merchant has ever followed him in these paths. It is in this way that the dif-

ferent peoples of the earth came to know each other. Geography is first of all a chart of empires, and next an indication of the lines of commerce.

Fighting and trading have been the main business of the human race from the beginning; at least, the historian has found little else worthy of his commemoration. The humanities of civilisation would seem to have grown out of its inhumanities; and, strange as it may seem, the noblest and most virile periods of human history seem to have been those in which there was the most downright fighting.

In the lulls of peace there would appear to have been the most ignoble exhibition of human selfishness. The brutishness of glutted ambition, of forces relaxed after martial strain, the gladiatorial contests of peace, the competitions of the market-place — these are the meanest aspects of human life as shown in history. The education of youth in the warrior periods was correspondingly nobler than in those dominated by the commercial idea. Greater importance was attached to manly exercises; and there was at least a wholesome development of physical powers. The literature and philosophy of these periods reflected this virility. Physical heroism has this one virtue, at least — that it readily confronts death, counting it as nothing. It is in more comfortable and luxurious times, when the studies of youth are occupied by the artifices and subtleties through which they may get the better of each other in the mart and the forum, that that extreme selfishness is developed, the sign of which is indicated in the maxim, "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

Moreover in the great and decisive conflicts of history down to those which arrested the progress of Mohammedanism in the West, there was usually, on one side, some new and vigorous race, in which the primal passions of Nature were strong, and which had not yet lost its virile

force in any artificial system of training. The triumph of these peoples, whose very existence was hardly suspected ere they broke forth upon the complacent valleys, with the abruptness of storms whose strength is first manifest in the havoc they have made, had in it a kind of wholesome virtue, like that of the mountain torrents which purify what they overwhelm—the virtue of a Hercules cleansing the Augean stables of a stagnant life. These movements not only resemble those of Nature, through which the sudden urgency of her winds and her waves overthrows what has seemed most fixed and stable, but we inevitably associate with them a divine purpose, which, like the violence of flood and earthquake, takes the semblance of a majestic wrath; nay, these activities, however perverse in their impelling motive, and entirely unconscious of their higher meaning, serve to illustrate the heavenly and saving operation by which the new and vital displaces the old and outworn. Verily God is in His world, even in its worldliness—the God not of the dead but of the living, acknowledging as His own that which is not willingly His own, lodging in the brutal fulminations of human wrath the lightnings of His heaven, which destroy that they may save.

XXVIII

But let us consider and measure this worldly scheme in the terms of its own philosophy.

Worldly Philosophy of the Worldly Scheme.

According to this philosophy, man is not fallen; his first estate was his lowest, and he has risen from age to age to constantly higher planes of action. From the physical is evolved the mental, and from these the moral. Man's history, since he came to have a history, is the record of his

successful conflicts with brute force without and within. As a savage, he confronted Nature in a condition of almost utter helplessness. With the development of intelligence he succeeded in bringing natural forces to his aid, and came to look upon them not as enemies but as allies. He took Nature in hand and improved upon her plan, transforming her wilderness into a garden, domesticating wild animals, and subduing her wildness in his own primal appetites and passions by the temperance of his reason and the restraints of moral culture. He wrestled with Nature, as Jacob with the angel, compelling her to bless him. He found, moreover, within himself a mysterious power more imperative than his passions in its compulsion, associating itself with hopes and fears that overleaped the bounds of his narrow sense-experience, informing his imagination, so that the darkness, the sea, nay, the common light of day itself, were peopled with bright or dreadful shapes, inviting or forbidding; and it made wholly its own the invisible realm beyond the grave. Fear made the first gods; but, with every advance in knowledge and the arts, the faces of man's divinities grew brighter and friendlier. Dominion over Nature and himself gave him also dominion over his superstition. He took religion in hand, and shaped its outward embodiment to suit his improved civilisation. This progress is from simple to complex in all social development. At every step it is an emancipation from some form of bondage — physical, mental, moral, or religious. The scheme must not be judged wholly by its past or its present. It has its own millennial prophecies, promising, in its ultimate perfection, universal peace and freedom, the complete mastery of Nature, the abolition of drudgery through the practical application of scientific discoveries and inventions, the expulsion of disease and the indefinite prolonga-

tion of life, the extinction of poverty, the union of all mankind in associative harmony, and the establishment of righteousness.

XXIX

Such is the philosophic plea for civilisation according to the worldly scheme.

A Consideration of this Plea.

It is assumed that, as there has been no degeneration, there is no need of regeneration. Progress is through a series of conflicts, in each of which a higher plane of movement is reached, and, at each successive stage, brute force and passion are transmuted into a finer and more complex form. There is no radical change of the human heart, by which its motives are transformed, or by which it is brought into willing co-operation with the will of a heavenly Father. It is a gladiatorial scheme, beginning and continuing in resistance to that will; a struggle to attain, by its own strength, perfection within its limited scope and in the line of its limited aspirations.

If we could conceive of this worldly life as going on uninterruptedly, and having its own way upon earth, we should see that a refined selfishness might indeed lead to a mechanical sort of altruism, since the welfare of the individual must depend upon that of all; that war might give way to a forced peace; that competition might yield to combination; and that perfect equity might result from a nice scientific adjustment of social relations; and all this, the human heart remaining the same.

XXX

The Divine Life in the Worldly Scheme itself.

But no scheme of life can be godless. The bee, as it flits from flower to flower, is seeking only to slake its thirst for sweets, ignorant that while the flowers are nourishing him, he is perpetuating them. So man, in following the devices of his own heart, unwittingly accomplishes the divine purposes. We note only his feverish haste toward the satisfaction of his greed or ambition; but all of his faultful life fits into a faultless web. Whatever may be his volition or proposition, the divine disposition holds him through unseen bonds to the Eternal Purpose. Consider what it means in the divine dynamics that every moment a child is born into the world — the incarnate symbol of the new life. If only for one generation the hearts of the fathers should be turned to the children, society would be regenerated. How near women are kept to the living way because of their motherhood. Man may seem to quite entirely divorce himself from any outward bond to Nature, but woman must be held by this one tie, and, therefore, unselfish love cannot wholly die in her heart. In all the intensity, exaltation and tenderness of that love out of which in all ages has grown the home, the heavenly Father hath invited all souls unto a higher love; and, if He hath appeared in these relations which are confined to the earthly continuance of human life, He hath all the more made His presence and power felt with reference to His eternal purposes, even in the unconsenting heart of man: in every unselfish friendship, in every stirring of compassionate sympathy, in every noble aspiration, in every response of the heart to Nature's deeper meanings, in every softening and subduing sorrow.

Whatever of fragrance and beauty, of sweetness and light, there has been in the flowering of humanity in any age or country is the glory of the divine intent, showing as through a veil which the reluctant soul keeps between its own and the heavenly plan. Wherever there is life, fresh, up-springing, it is of God, and is cherished of Him, and reinforced by every vital current of Nature, and by His indwelling Spirit bearing it up against all hardening and corrupting influences, against the maxims of worldly experience — the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But, if it yield unto the leaven of the world, its juices are dried up, and it falls to pieces of its own brittleness, or is swept away by a fresher current of life. Thus, as we have seen, whole races wither, and are overrun by those whose vitality is not yet exhausted. Thus a great city is every few years renewed by the absorption of rustic vitality. Thus, indeed, a new generation ever comes, with fresh ideals and a trumpet-blast of hope; and, while it is still folded close to God and Nature in its youthful dream, the divine harmony strives to find expression in every shaping of its outward life.

This new life overflows its limitations, in ideal aspiration, in the dreams of genius. It is thus that art is born — the overflow taking spontaneously a rhythmic expression in dance and song. The less vital forms of art — painting, sculpture and architecture — through which life finds rhythmic expression in stone or on the canvas, gaining in the durability of the material what is lost in vitality, indicate the recession of the flood-tide, a period in which provision is made against life's brevity; the dramatic movement is fixed in statuesque groupings, the music is frozen into marble arches and pillars and arabesques. The ideal dream of youth, fed by the rich juices of Nature, as by strong wine, full of an enthusiasm which ignores death,

expressing life through a more vivid life — through accelerated movement, through quickened vibrations that themselves leap to over-tones — yields at length to the hardness and heaviness of the worldly, which, seeking to arrest death, arrests life also, holding in mortal suspense and repose its very representations on frescoed wall and carven frieze. Yet, even in repose, are these shapes beautiful with their rhythmic suggestions of the divine though halting harmony.

Thus even into the worldly scheme of life there enters not only all the God-given strength of man, but the divine life itself, giving it, despite its perversion, as much of truth and beauty as its broken types will hold, garlanding its very ruins with the flowers of a not wholly forgotten Eden.

XXXI

BEHOLD, then, Beloved, what a charm there hath been in the divine invitation to life! Nature hath not called unto man wholly in vain, and the striving of the Spirit with him hath not been without effect. And, since the appearing through His Son and the preaching of the Gospel of the kingdom, how hath the leaven of the kingdom wrought upon the hearts of men!

The Christ-Life in the Worldly Scheme.

So mighty is this divine life, and reaching so far in its infinite love, in ways unseen by us, that all judgment is taken from us, all arbitrary discernment between the children of this world and the children of the kingdom. It is God Himself who is taking care of His kingdom, and not we; it is He and not we who shall determine in what ways He will reconcile the world unto Himself. He hath regard to no distinctions such as we are wont to make — between

Jew and Gentile, baptised or unbaptised. The field is the world, and it is a field without fences. The wheat is not in one part thereof and the tares in another — they are growing together. To our eyes the tares may appear most conspicuous; but we know not the power which is in the seed that our Lord hath sown. We see what seems to be a mighty maelstrom swallowing up childhood and youth, all noble aspirations, all true manhood and womanhood. It is, indeed, this which is visible; but if our blessed Lord should show us what he sees in the hearts of men, if he should give us the large range of vision which comes of absolute faith — and the nearer we come to him the more he gives us this — we would see the weakness of what seems to us so strong, would understand how the things which are not bring to nought the things which are, and would learn that abundance and fertility belong only to the divine life. We would see that in all the revolutions and upheavals by which what we call the emancipations of our life have been effected, man hath proposed one thing, and God hath wrought another, and greater. It is a narrow philosophy which discerns only the human proposition, ignoring the divine purpose. Faith, illuminated by the Spirit of Truth, discerns only the divine purpose, and sees that every time "the old order changeth, giving place to new," it is the kingdom of God which is advancing and that of the worldly which is receding, that Christ is being glorified, though unto the eye of sense it seemeth the hour when he is to be delivered up.

XXXII

WHERESOEVER it breaks and yields, the worldly scheme takes on the strength of God; it is only in its own proper triumphs that its weakness is illustrated. Its characteristic

distinction is its unvitality, and this distinction becomes more evident at every stage of its progress, in some new surrender of life and the greater predominance of system. Patriarchal simplicity is given up, and a more complex civilisation takes its place, in which, while men are brought nearer together, they are farther removed from Nature.

The Unvitality of the Worldly Scheme in itself.

In the development of industry and commerce, the city becomes dominant, draining into itself not only the products of the country but its very life, modifying all industries to suit its artificial wants, substituting unnatural amusements for simple pleasures, developing an artificial system of life in art, education and society. When the lifeless forms of ancient civilisation were broken up, the crude energies which had demolished them submitted to the sovereignty of the intelligence which had shaped the complex mechanism of Roman life; while the fresh impulses of the new life, despite its ignorance, gave for a time its wild fragrance and charm to mediæval institutions, catching eagerly enough of the vital breathings of the Gospel to withstand the prevalent cynicism and asceticism of a monkish age, to develop chivalry, and to transform basilicas into Gothic cathedrals, giving to architecture the shaping of its free forest life; while it survived the wreck of feudalism, and breathed something of its free spirit into nascent nationalities; while even to-day its sweetness and savor linger in homely virtues, in honest manliness and womanliness, in wholesome patriotic aspirations — yet, for the most part, its forces seem to have been exhausted in building up the monstrous artificial structure of our modern civilisation. With the Renaissance came the characteristic watchword of modern progress, declaring that "Knowledge is Power." We have glorified the understanding, placing it not only above the

physical but above the spiritual. With every new discovery of Nature's laws, and every new practical application of them, we have surrendered something of life, in response to the demands of a relentless system. The new industrial era, with its extreme division of labor, has made the work of a man's hands, which was formerly in some sense vital, wholly mechanical. Corporate organisation, while it has almost neutralised individual competition, has given a power to wealth which no government not absolutely despotic would venture to exercise; and in large combinations, these organisations have placed the people at the mercy of an oligarchy. And such is the vice of the system, in its ruinous waste, that such combinations, however despotic, are regarded as a relief. In such a system, the factory with its unnatural confinement is a necessity; and so severe has become the industrial competition that in some countries the workingman's one day of rest has been invaded. Is it wonderful that despotic combination should seem a blessing in comparison with the waste and intolerable exactions of competition? The majority of civilised mankind are bound hand and foot to this mechanical monster, their energies being wholly exhausted in gaining a physical subsistence. And the science which has helped modern society to the elaboration of this system, has done its utmost to abolish "superstition," to destroy the "illusion" of immortality, to substitute an Almighty Power for a loving Father, and to give us an ethical Christ. It has secularised our schools, and made of them mental factories, the strain of whose mechanism is as severe as that of industry, and whose scope is ever more and more limited to material aims. It has devitalised art, and made even the leisure of the rich a wilderness of corroding cares and lifeless pleasures — and there are no Barbarians to conquer us!

XXXIII

"WHAT then?" saith the Philosopher—"We have not reached the highest plane. Social science has yet her work to do. All these mechanical improvements have increased the facilities of communication between men, ever widening their associative activities, having in view the final emancipation. When knowledge is perfect, there will be perfect equality. These corporate combinations are preparing the way for a system of universal co-operation. Then there will be no rich and no poor. In a perfect democracy, the state will regulate everything. Every one will do his allotted share of work, and all will have sufficient leisure for symmetrical development. We shall apply science to the perfection of the human race through natural selection. Then, the environment also being wholly arranged according to reason, we shall attain unto perfect righteousness, and realise the highest dreams of science in the Religion of Humanity."

The Sociological Millennium.

Granting the possibility of such an attainment, what—considered as a merely scientific achievement—would it be worth? It would indeed be the perfection of a mechanism now so defective that science has condemned it as ridiculous judged by the standard of its own pretensions—so defective that considered as a system for the production of wealth, it is such a failure that the equal distribution of its products would leave all the sharers miserably poor. The programme of sociology fully carried out will indeed remove this reproach, and will be a justification of science. But selfishness would not be eradicated from the human heart. Indeed, it is educated selfishness that is embodied in this proposed perfect ethical system of adjustments. In

this artificially produced equilibrium, this dull uniformity of an absolutely regulated existence, the last of life must have been surrendered.

XXXIV

BUT, as in every movement hitherto, by which man has proposed to himself a more advanced stage in his regulation of Nature and society, God has invisibly decreed His own purpose in the place of man's proposition, so, doubtless, He patiently awaiteth this final transition, this last refinement of civilisation, this consummation of human mechanism, for the most glorious manifestation of His following love—so that, in the end, it shall be not the human but the divine wisdom that is justified.

The Divine Issue.

XXXV

THIS divine Wisdom is justified of all her children—that is, of all the children of the kingdom. And who are these?

The Children of the Kingdom Accept the Gospel.

We shall not find them among those who assume that the Gospel is impracticable, an ideal truth which can be realised only in another world. It has been the fashion of all modern philosophy, theological or secular, to regard the life of the Galilean community as a temporary scheme suited to an Oriental environment, but contrary to all natural laws and impossible in a vigorous and wholesome human development. It is held that the teaching of Christ illustrated his divinity; but that we are human, and selfishness is an essential attribute of our human nature, and, while we are to accept it as a spiritual truth that we love others as we

love ourselves, all our outward systems must express the opposite truth. Christianity, in the absolute sense, is opposed to Nature; it is a spiritual drama, representing a supernatural world; Christ, the central person in this representation, is our Saviour, through his death satisfying the claims of divine justice, and through his resurrection foretokening the change which shall give us a spiritual in the place of this natural body. His righteousness, impossible to us, is — if we appropriate it through faith in him — imputed unto us, and in the day of judgment we shall be separated from all those who do not thus believe. This is our salvation — to be delivered from the natural operation, which is only evil; and our faith is, even in this world, a spiritual operation anticipating the spiritual life which can be fully realised only in a better world.

This is not Christianity, but a soteriological system of purely human construction, an evasion of the Gospel, which is the simple revelation of a divine life to be received by us, to be a kingdom within us — a kingdom to be realised on earth as it is in heaven.

All who accept this divine life, submitting wholly thereunto, are saved by it, and more than saved, because they have a new life, yielding the fruits of the Spirit. Not only is selfishness obliterated and, in the light of the kingdom, seen to be contrary to Nature, but the positive principle of love takes its place. These are the children of the kingdom, whatever may be their theology, or whether they be within or outside of the ecclesiastical pale. Offences and stumbling-blocks may be put in their way by human sophistication, but they have the Gospel and cannot be confounded.

XXXVI

Hidden Life of the Children.

Now, it is through the strong new life of these children — those who have consented unto His will — that there is ever the Divine appearing in the fresh triumphs of His kingdom, whenever the strongholds of the worldly system are overthrown. Hidden hitherto under the superficial shell of worldliness, their life breaketh through, and the righteousness of the kingdom taketh the place of the vain righteousness devised by man.

These children of the kingdom, who are indeed to inherit the earth, do not bear upon their banners the inscription of Equal Rights, but of Love and Good Will. They claim no share of the vain possessions and empty honors of the world. Nor do they hold themselves aloof from the turmoils of the world's strife or the noisome airs of its pestilential peace. They have turned first one cheek and then the other to the smiters, hoping by some way of love to reach their hearts. They have not striven, save as they have taken part in the Father's loving strife with men; nor have their voices been heard in the streets, crying aloud for barren justice; their hope is only in fertile, abounding, renewing love. Clothed at once in earthly and heavenly simplicity, they have waited upon the Lord, following him in dark ways wherever there are burdens to be borne or captives to be released. They have sought not mastery but service — to give to others rather than to receive gifts; they have opposed gentleness to insolence, warming the cold places of the world with their hearts' fervor, and covering the hardness of worldly systems with the quick tendrils and gracious blossomings of the exhaustless life which they have drawn from the

Son of God. By this clinging ye shall know them, and not by their separation from sinners, like that of the Pharisee, in the solemn isolation of the temple.

God taketh care of His kingdom; and its children have no solicitude for it or for themselves. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and with his is freely given wherever there is the greatest need, where the frailty of human effort is most manifest; and thus it is that above, around, and beneath every decaying tissue of a worldly civilisation there is this invisible life awaiting the Lord's own time.

And of these children how many are there who are not yet called by His name—how many entangled in the worldly mesh, waiting to be released, like insects from their *larvæ!* How like a grave seems the chrysalis from which the butterfly escapes—the moment of its complete death being the moment of flight for the hitherto hidden life bound up with it!

Looking upon society, the activities which come within the small arc of our vision show not the hidden life which is being developed; it is the mechanical system that is conspicuous. We are involved in a network of human problems—economical, political, educational, and religious. In times of revolution, when the tenure of wealth and of physical existence itself is shaken, we take note of the hidden life then manifesting itself, like lightning in a storm; and it is usually the society which suffers the most, which is the most completely upset in the upheaval, that is spiritually the greater gainer, being more effectually released from traditional forms and material obstructions.

God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Even though the church should die, the kingdom will live. It is a seed which hath been sown and which groweth while men sleep. The Father worketh in all humanity and not in a chosen part. What if He raise

up children unto His kingdom from among the children of this world, seeing that they are in their generation wiser than the children of light, in that they more readily throw aside tradition and show a quicker and more vigorous life? What if He seek His own among them that are repelled by the dead forms and artificial solemnities which He Himself abhorreth? Many there are who have been brought into the kingdom, being led in diverse ways, but chiefly through the knowledge of Christ, who are weary of worldly maxims and worldly systems, but who find in ecclesiastical channels no way to an expression of life, and whose co-operation the Church does not invite in any living way. These would readily find their places in such a Christian society as our Lord established, one which recognised no class distinctions, one in which equal love took the place of charity, one in which there was no accommodation to worldly methods—an association for the expression of the heavenly life upon the earth. For such co-operation it is only necessary that faith should expel practical infidelity.

XXXVII

God worketh in all for salvation, and especially in them that believe—who have a living faith. The children wait upon Him; they behold His work, and, though they know not the way thereof, though it hath for them wonderful surprises, they co-operate therewith. They have no exclusiveness, they stand not aloof from the world, nor do they judge the world; it is only love that is in their hearts, and they follow their Lord whithersoever he leadeth, even away from the temple and among the dark mountains, seeking to find and take to their hearts their shabby,

Faith of the Children.

bruised and captive brethren. They work and watch and pray — to love is to do all these, and they expect not justification but only love. It is always this — love calling unto love. They do not shun the temple, but here also, following their Lord, they seek to drive from it the money-changers, and to warn men against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They would break up images, and restore the love-feasts, and fill the house of God with children singing glad hosannas. They have no contempt of the earthly life and give themselves not up to austerities and sanctities and penances and mortifications. It is life not death which they seek — a larger, freer, fuller life. And they ally themselves with all who seek to get nearer to Nature's heart, knowing that they who follow her living ways draw nearer to the Lord; and they hail with delight every application of Nature's forces which promises greater freedom to men from their incessant toil, knowing that, though for the moment it may serve the selfishness of the powerful and seem to strengthen the bonds of the weak, yet, in the end, it must serve Love's eternal purpose. Their watchword is not that Knowledge is Power, but they know that there is no true enlightenment that is not from God, and that, however it may for a time be associated with the pride of human intellect, it is more closely linked with His loving purpose; and when they behold men drawing nearer together in space and time through steam and electric communication, their hearts are glad within them, for they see in this not the immediate result — the corporate abuse and the strengthening of a selfish despotism — but the preparation for the universal brotherhood of God's kingdom.

Such is their faith. They are not disturbed by any problems, least of all do they attempt the solution of any. Outside of harmony with the Father's will, all things are

in disorder, and no philosophical adjustment can bring them into agreement with each other. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Arrest this flowing life from human hearts — leaving them in all else unchanged — and set the whole world in order in accordance with the wisest plan for its outward perfection, yet would the first revived pulsation bring on the old confusion. It is not a matter of arrangement, of environment. Society must be regenerated.

XXXVIII

They are not Quietists.

THE children of the kingdom look only to the heart. Their faith is not in reform. Yet they are not Quietists, saying, "We have nought to do with all this." Rather they have to do with all this, since they have to do with Him from whom is all life and the renewal thereof. Their lamps go not out, for at any time the Bridegroom may appear, and with the eagerness of children they watch for the slightest sign of his coming. They take part in all the activities of the world, not with reference to what in them is to come from human effort, but with reference to the divine purpose to be manifested therein. Ye may look for them wherever there is a stir of life, a quick breathing, a new utterance. The Spirit is moving, and ye cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; all these living ways, which are like the ways of the viewless wind, are thronged by the children of the New Life. When the storm is past, we ask, How came a Washington just there? or a Lincoln just here? — types of God's chosen agents a century apart — but it could not have been otherwise.

XXXIX

Worldly Simulation of the Kingdom.

THE worldly scheme, in all its perversion, offers in its development broken types of the kingdom, and looks toward a simulation of its life. As we have seen, the divine life can never be wholly expelled from it; and the evidences of this life are especially apparent in its associative activity, though disguised by its conventionalities. In movements that seem to express a collective human instinct, where arbitrary and conscious volitions are held in suspense, the life of a people is lifted out of its frictions and discords into a divine rhythm. We call these heroic moments, when self is forgotten, when all material possessions count for nothing, and life itself is of no value but to serve a higher life. We have thus an image of the ideal association of the kingdom.

The artist and the student, laying aside all disguises, confront Nature as life, and are caught up into a freer movement, where they possess not but are possessed, where their activities are arrested and a divine influence enters, where their voices are silent and a deeper voice is heard. Out of this rapture, which hath the freedom of the dream, they call men to a higher life, showing them some similitude thereof. It is a divine leading. And, even apart from such exaltations, and apart from the fragments of rhythm which Art hath either reclaimed of an Eden lost or prophetically caught of an Eden to come, every new discovery and invention is a true bit of the kingdom, however misfitted into the worldly scheme.

XL

Conception of the Ideal Life.

THE conception of an ideal spiritual life is exceedingly vague, except as we derive it directly from our Lord's unfolding thereof and from his own life. There is here no distinction between the ideal and the real. As he met men where they were — in the entanglements of their perverse ways — so do all his followers at every step confront the worldly disorder, and must take it as they find it, having faith in the final harmony.

The Imagination exhausts its resources in vain, attempting to construct this ideal life. We may suppose that, in place of the desire for mastery and for material possession, the heroism of love and faith is dominant, since our Lord hath said that the meek shall inherit the earth — they who overcome evil with good. This heroism of meekness not only hath in it all that is possible of human courage in the face of life and death, but is reinforced by the divine might. Here is an army whose weapons are drawn from the armory of heaven. We may imagine an array of bright angelic forms, supple as Michael's, shining with the health of seraphs, from their radiant brows, beneath which the piercing glance of every eye is like the flash of Ithuriel's spear, to their beautiful feet upon the mountains — upon the vantage-ground of truth: and unto them truth is life, and life is love. They have the wisdom of serpents, the harmlessness of doves, and the strength of God. The whole race of men upon earth becoming such as these, we may picture to ourselves a society in which the natural tradition of impulse and knowledge is perfect and sufficient; a society without a history and without monuments, and whose intellectual development is in no way

separate from its forward-looking life; a society in which there is a common bond of love uniting all hearts and all activities, so holding to the immediate contact with Nature that there is no monstrous aggregation of human life in cities; a society without conventional distinctions, all laboring alike and together as one family, and in which, as there would be no drudgery, so, on the other hand, there would be no artificial amusement — the sharp distinction between work and play no longer holding; a society without a government for the administration of justice, since the very notion of justice arises only from injustice, — without ethical regulation, the spontaneous spiritual impulse having taken the place of binding duty, — without charity, since love has removed the occasion for its exercise, — without polish, since in the alchemy of this flowing life there is nothing hard enough to take it, — without refinement, save as the fire of life refineth, — without canons of taste or rules of discipline, since an obligation from within holds, in consistency with perfect freedom, all life to the harmony of spiritual law; a society having in its constructions and interpretations the original endowment of divination, through the divine wisdom informing the human, so that its progress in art and knowledge is rapid beyond our ability to conceive by comparison with the achievements of what we know as civilisation.

In some such large lines do we imagine the life of the kingdom, following the intimations of our Lord and the suggestions of his life. But the spiritual life is so far hidden, as to the possibilities of its associative development, that the delineation seems unreal and remote as that of some unearthly continent. No divine revelation is given us ever, save touching a point already reached — there is no lifting of ulterior veils, excepting the unveiling of an endless life through our Lord's resurrection.

There be those who would fain believe that this kingdom is indeed to be referred to an unearthly continent, who would not that the heavenly should be confounded with the earthly, save by some compromise with or accommodation to worldliness. But our Lord brings it near, giving it a lodgment in our hearts, neither suggesting nor suffering a compromise. In every unfolding of the heavenly life, he brings it side by side with the worldly, always maintaining as essential, not its exclusiveness or isolation, but its ideal integrity. What seems unto man so impracticable — as regeneration seemed unto Nicodemus — he taught as easy. Difficulty is a characteristic of the worldly scheme. Here is the field of our Faith — to comprehend this ease.

When, therefore, we regard the magnitude of the worldly scheme, we, in the exercise of this faith, and knowing that unto God nothing is difficult, bear witness to the heavenly as something assured, because it is of Him. If we consider the Gospel of the Kingdom to be impracticable, or as something which must be modified to adapt it to our civilisation before it can have an earthly reality, we have not faith.

XLI

Only by Entering into the Fellowship can we Comprehend its Development.

It is only in the heart which hath in it the vital principle of the kingdom, growing into an outward representation thereof, that there can be the further development, through the Spirit, of truth beyond that distinctly revealed by our Lord. And only in the association of all as one in this higher life can there be a full revelation of its possibilities — a divine revelation, since the life itself is a divine communication. It is not a communication which

destroys individuality, but which intensifies and exalts it. The fulness of the individual life is the result of the complete realisation of the heavenly life associatively. In the largest sense of the word there can be no individual salvation.

The spiritual life is developed according to natural laws. In the worldly scheme we note the operation of these laws, modified by the hardness of human hearts resisting the divine Spirit. We recognise the force here of association, even of a discordant association, so that all humanity is involved in the degeneration. Now if a scheme involving discordant elements and opposed moreover to the divine will thus illustrates the strength of association, so that by a natural necessity evil becomes the common heritage of mankind, the perversion touching all hearts, with that marvellous communicability which there is in all disease, how much more would we expect that the leaven of the kingdom, inducing the spirit of harmony and of assent to the divine will, should include all humanity—that the influence leading in the way of life should lead all as one —that being moreover the easier way: humanity in this view including all who have ever lived,—and we know not what other beings may be conjoined with it in its restoration, any more than we know what others may have been associated with its error,—for association is not only of the visible but of the invisible.

XLII

We see only too clearly the strength of the worldly scheme. The life of God in unwilling hearts is turned awry. Any noble aspiration, the moment it has an outward social expression, is, in like manner, distorted by inveterate prejudices and animosities. The conceptions

of God generally entertained would appear to be blasphemous, save as we see that they correspond to misconceptions of all life. Indeed the terms in which the divine traits are expressed are borrowed from those expressing the worldly idea of human perfection — such terms as are entirely notional and unvital and are not even suggested in Nature or in Christ. The things which He abhors are represented as especially pleasing in His sight — that from which He would deliver us as that which He desires in us. The outward structure of faith, as ecclesiastically developed, tends to fix these misconceptions unalterably in the human mind; and it is especially these, as being definite conceptions, that are taught first of all to the children.

The Mystery of Ungodliness.

Neither theology nor physical science has exaggerated the depravity of man, which is his heritage from generation to generation — not a depravity existing in the child's heart, which in its softness and its fresh impulses is the true image of the kingdom — but one of inherited aptitudes, that soon find expression through their correspondences with the worldly system, while his natural impulses are suppressed. The training of the child is relentlessly directed toward this suppression. It is not simply that his attention is fixed upon external possessions and refinements as especially important and that the prizes of the world are set before him for the incitement of all his youthful ardors, but that, even in the selection of his childish playmates, he is taught directly or indirectly that he is better than others, or, if he be a child of the poor, is made in his first years to feel the scorn of those who shun him as if he were an outcast; so that the children are divided into opposite camps, with that strife in their tender hearts which will in their maturer years develop,

on the one hand, into overmastering pride, extortion and Pharisaism, and, on the other, into envy, hatred and rude vengeance; though, meanwhile, many will have been transformed from the weaker to the stronger camp, helping to brutalise the latter and to intensify its cruelties. To the little ones this exclusiveness is taught as one of the proprieties of life — it leads to its monstrous tragedies. The education of youth is through a system which exaggerates the competitive strife for worldly prizes. The political and industrial systems afford fields for the practical application of this education, and for the distribution of the prizes. Such vitality as is not exhausted in these competitions is devoted to what are called social duties and, with a finer sarcasm, social pleasures. Included among the "duties" is the amelioration of evils created by the system. To remove from charity even the poor semblance it has to love, in the direct manifestation of sympathy, societies are established for its scientific organisation!

It is unnecessary to consider the horde of parasites developed by the system. It is sufficiently apparent not only that worldliness is strong, but that its strength is that of an association in which, willingly or unwillingly, all men are partners — nay, in which God is Himself made a participant, since it is His strength in us and in Nature that is abused therein. It may be — and, if, beneath its diversity, all life is one, it must be — that all sentient life in the universe is involved in this perversion. What we call worldliness may indeed be only a fragment of all-worldliness. It is an overwhelming wave, whose beginning and whose extent is beyond the range of our knowledge or of our judgment. It is the mystery of ungodliness!

XLIII

The Mystery of Godliness.

But alongside of this scheme, we spiritually discern the life of the kingdom, not as militant, but as triumphant —triumphant because it is not militant; because it cometh not by observation; because its faith is not in the strife against worldliness or in an amelioration thereof, or in any attempts to reform it, but only in the divine purpose which chooseth the weak things and the foolishness of the world to confound the wise and mighty, its treasures of truth being confided not unto the wise and prudent, but unto babes and sucklings.

Neither do the children of the kingdom condemn this worldliness, any more than did their Lord; and indeed which of them would cast the first stone, as being without sin?

Nevertheless the worldly scheme cometh ever to judgment in the presence of the kingdom — in the awful presence of the Spirit of Love; and it is condemned already. To the vision of Faith the kingdom is triumphant and worldliness a mask, an illusion, which, though it last a million years, is as nothing unto the strength of the Eternal Love that encompasses it round about and operates upon all hearts beneath its hollowness, as behind a thin veil incapable of obscuring the divine glory. How great is the mystery of godliness!

XLIV

The kingdom cometh — almost imperceptibly, its operations are so hidden from our sight; and it cometh to all. It is the noiseless stream below the troubled surface of the opposing worldly current. In the association of its hidden

life it embraces all humanity — it is the everlastingly faithful covenant with every living creature. But there is nothing hidden that shall not be made known.

Conclusion.

This growth of the seed, which goeth on while men sleep, is toward a glorious harvest in the light. In the field of each human heart are the wheat and also the tares. In them that consent unto the divine will there is — even though the growth of wheat be an hundredfold — some chaff and straw for the consuming fire. Regeneration is the beginning of a new life in the midst of worldly entanglements and distractions, even as the worldly life kicketh against the pricks of the quickening Spirit. As the strife of the worldly against the heavenly grows less and less, because of the living witnesses to this quickening love, because of the leaven of the kingdom in the world, so do the regenerate reach a fuller and freer life through the reconciliation of the world unto God, and they cannot themselves be wholly delivered save by a universal deliverance. Even the innumerable throng of witnesses have for themselves a direct and vital interest in the glorious issue.

THE children hold fast to the everlasting fountain of life; but it is theirs only as it springs up spontaneously in their own hearts, and no sooner do they feel its first glad impulse than each one seeks to find his brother — to realise the community of the life, which is then seen to be the only divine communion. The true freedom of the children is the liberty of the heart seeking not its own but another's good; and it consists with that sublime faith which fears no evil from any contact, since whatever the divine life thus humanly embodied touches is spellbound of Love: the peril becomes harmless; violence is subdued; hatred

is disarmed; death itself becomes stingless. What strange incongruities seem to enter the field of this manifestation! It is the only free life, yet is it alone truly within restraint — as is shown in the primitive Christian development — decent, and modest, and chaste, even submitting to bonds, lest offence be given, and soliciting commandment. Because of its inward delight in loving, it alone can set the boundaries of love, keeping its strong current safe and wholesome, sincere and guileless. Out of its liberty is born duty, out of its ease the readiness to take all burdens. It inherits earth and heaven — yet from both it flies that it may abide with grief. Having banished the spirit of strife, yet it forthwith enters into numberless strivings — strong without tension, resolving all hardness. Joy bows its head, and in the shining radiance the eyelids droop, not from excess of light, but from sympathy with them that are in dark places. The wings on which it might fly to mountain heights are folded in the gruesome valleys. It is the habit of the divine life to thus deny its essential attributes — to suffer everything because it is the source of all joy, and because it embraceth all good to consort with all evil; and they that accept this life take also this habit, following their Lord.

Their submissions are not accommodations. The sign of the mastery of the divine life in us is the readiness to serve. Fully receiving this life we pass under all yokes, without subjugation. We are still free, taking upon us the yoke that is easy; and all burdens are light. So long as we have this life, whose outward embodiment is a loving and catholic fellowship — whatever mistakes we may make in action or in belief; howsoever we may deny our very freedom, being perhaps in many ways even misled in our self-abnegations, taking to ourselves much needless travail and disquietude; whatever of our perverse nature may

find expression in our zeal — yet, denying not the Spirit of Love, we shall in due time be led into the true way. It is only when we deny this Spirit that we go fatally astray, and all contacts corrupt, all submissions become compromises, and all service loses its divine sweetness. Love, and only Love, is the fulfilling of the Law.

The last word of the Christ is that we love one another; and out of this divine human fellowship must be developed the ultimate Gospel of truth. Of such a Gospel we have the brightest glimpse in the record of early Christianity. The world is awaiting a new Pentecost. But what embodiment in human economies this new spiritual revival will take, we know not; nor can we be sure that its bright light may not again suffer eclipse. We only know that so long as its impulse is wholly of divine quickening, love will take the place of self-seeking and will build up human brotherhood; and the shaping of this life will be the expression of some utterly new divine delight in the free play of emotional activities. There may be lapses; human aspiration may again suffer the mortal disease of ambition, and the eager, joyous possession of the earth may again take on the sickly hue of selfishness, the tender mastery of love become again the love of mastery; but this hardening unto death is also a part of the divine plan — the winter of the heart covering the vitalities of springtime. Every new cycle will more nearly approach the earthly realisation of the heavenly harmony.

When our interpretation attempts the anticipation of truth beyond a life already lived, it is vague and worthless; but, in the cycle of Christian life now nearly completed, certain principles of the Gospel have been clearly illustrated and reinforced. One of the most important of these is that the meek shall inherit the earth. Christianity displaced Paganism without a struggle. No life involves

antagonism until its faith in the divine strength is given over; then in its mortal weakness it becomes gladiatorial. The phrase "Muscular Christianity," instead of simply indicating a tonic and wholesome activity, is apt to be used to express the pride of strenuous will and self-dependence. Neither this attitude of modern Protestantism nor its extreme individualism characterised the period of greatest spiritual vitality—they are rather symptoms of mortal failure. On the other hand neither wholesome activity nor the repose of a vital faith can be looked for through supine submission to ecclesiastical authority. This is but another symptom of mortal degeneration.

The children of the kingdom are the friends of God, building with Him they know not clearly what. They have never known. Every unfolding of the divine life in them—in the shapings of their own life—is a surprise. When they would comfortably abide in the structures they have shaped under the impulses of fresh inspiration, then there always comes that other surprise, as of sad autumn abruptly following upon summer, the deep green changing to the almost taunting brightness of decay—the surprise of corruption, so necessary to any new surprise of life. When the sun flames into a sudden glory before his setting, there is a moment of sadness, and then we seem to hear a voice, saying, He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go. When the forms of life with which they have fondly lingered break up and disappear, the children take Nature at her own bright meaning. Their regrets dissolve into the raptures of coming life—they are the children of the Resurrection.

FINIS.

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